

***This newsletter was updated on 5/30/2018 5:30 p.m. to correct errors in the Legislative Enactments document. Please substitute the corrected document for your records. We apologize for the inconvenience.***



Volume 10, May 30th, 2018

# Workers' Comp Clarion



## **The Chairman's Corner**

Chairman Mark Liotta

In our fifth year of existence, it is apparent that change is a permanent resident at the Workers'

Compensation Commission (WCC). Our demonstrable

## **Upcoming Events**

•2018 Educational Conference,  
October 4-5,

The Reed Center Sheraton  
Midwest City

Registration starts July 1, 2018

success is a function of our willingness to adapt to change while maintaining focus on our mission.

The WCC's continuing efforts at the Oklahoma Legislature have borne fruit this year. The return of the affidavit of exempt status is a significant milestone. In addition to providing a more logical mechanism for small businesses to comply with the workers comp statutes, it also removes a layer of unnecessary bureaucracy. This enables the WCC to make better use of its limited resources. Replacing the somewhat onerous certificate of non-coverage with the affidavit of exempt status should prove to be a win-win for all parties.

Our former executive director, Kim Bailey, has moved on to apply her managerial talents where they are needed at the Oklahoma State Department of Health. We have been fortunate to rely on the interim expertise of Judge Tish Sommer to steer our efforts. Judge Sommer has now elected to retire from her years of significant service to our State. The WCC is grateful to both of these ladies for their tireless service in putting the WCC on sound footing, and facing us in the right direction.

The WCC welcomes Brigadier General Hopper Smith (Ret.) as our new Executive Director.

Hopper comes to us having completed over 35 years of service in the Oklahoma Army National Guard. With a broad resume of accomplishments both in the public and private sectors, Hopper is well positioned to take the commission forward.

In an effort to mark our progress, both internally and for the public, the WCC has developed a presentation for media, elected officials, civic groups, and chambers of commerce. We stand ready and available to provide this

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### Oklahoma Workers' Compensation Commission

OKC Location:  
(405) 522-3222  
1915 N Stiles Ave, 231  
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma  
73105

Tulsa Location:  
(918) 295-3732  
212 Kerr State Office Bldg.  
440 South Houston  
Tulsa, Oklahoma 74127

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presentation for any group with an interest in the administration of workers' Compensation in Oklahoma.

Through seven commissioners, four executive directors, and a change in leadership at the Legislature, the WCC has managed to maintain focus on our mission. That mission is to provide a fair, unbiased forum for the hearing and administration of the claims of injured workers. On this path, we will continue to serve the taxpayers with integrity, and earn the confidence of our stakeholders.

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# **SAVE THE DATE**

Fifth Annual  
Oklahoma  
Workers' Compensation  
Educational Conference

**OCTOBER 4-5, 2018**

Sheraton Midwest City Hotel at the  
Reed Conference Center

Registration Opens July 1, 2018

PRESENTED BY  
THE OKLAHOMA WORKERS'  
COMPENSATION COMMISSION

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## A Message From our New Executive Director



Hopper Smith, Executive Director

I appreciate the opportunity afforded by the Commissioners to serve as the Executive Director of the Workers' Compensation Commission. Thanks to everyone for the accommodating reception during my first month at the Commission. As I mentioned to a few folks earlier last week, sometimes I feel like I have been bungee-chorded to a bullet train that left the station five minutes ago. I am trying to catch up to an organization that is in the midst of change. This has placed me in the position of learning as much as I can as fast as I can, while trying not to be a burden on those taking the time to instruct. I know there are many stakeholders that I have not had time to meet yet – I hope to do so before too long. In the meantime, I appreciate your patience as I get up to speed.

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## Legislative and Regulatory Update



Tish Sommer, ALJ

On the legislative front, [four measures](#) related to the workers' compensation system were enacted in 2018. **SB1249** (substitutes an Affidavit of Exempt Status for the Certificate of Noncoverage, effective 8/2/18). **SB1411** (directs certain excess funds collected from the OSHA tax to the state's General Revenue Fund, effective 8/2/18). **HB2722** (expands the state's exemption for agricultural labor from workers' compensation coverage to include ranch labor, effective 11/1/18). **HB2993** (directs transfer of surplus proceeds of impaired self-insured

employers to the Self-insurance Guaranty Fund, effective 11/1/18).

Regulatory activity included WCC determination of the [Multiple Injury Trust Fund assessment rate, forms changes](#), promulgation of [permanent rules](#) (currently pending declaration of approval by the Governor), and opening of the emergency rules and forms processes to implement the Legislature's adoption in SB1249 of the Affidavit of Exempt Status. Please monitor the Commission's "Alerts" tab on its website, <https://www.ok.gov/wcc/>, for additional notices on these and other matters.

[Click Here](#)

*Legislative Enactments (Corrected)*



## Developing A New Case System

By Eric Russell, Legal Operations Director

The Commission currently uses a database system called WCIS (Workers' Compensation Information System) to drive its principal operations. The WCIS system serves as the linchpin for the Commission's operations, but for numerous reasons is not a sustainable solution for the future. A new case system will serve as the foundation for the functions of almost every major division, including Case Commencement, Docketing, Order Writing, Permitting Services, and Compliance. The case system project will effectuate an evolution in the filing, docketing and ultimate disposition of cases by minimizing the use of paper forms, dispensing with or clarifying antiquated terminology, and by creating efficiencies in the Commission's business processes.

Aside from other improvements, the new system will also allow the Commission to move to a new format for processing proof of coverage (POC) information. The POC system allows

the Commission to verify coverage for a named employer on a claim, saving the parties the time and expense of having to find coverage. The new POC format will allow the Commission to reject reports that are incomplete or inaccurate, in addition to allowing much more information than what the current system provides. This will allow staff to more quickly and accurately identify coverage.

Principal development of the case system began August 15, 2017 and is scheduled to conclude in 2019. Development with the Commission's vendor, Objectstream, began with Case Commencement, including proof of coverage, and permitting. Requirements meetings have been held on the docketing portion as well. Currently the Commission's goal is to have a fully functioning permitting module and proof of coverage system by the end of 2018, and development on case commencement will continue throughout the year. In late-2018 or early-2019 work will resume on docketing and begin on order writing.



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## Medical Alert

Dr. Jay Cannon, Medical Director

We need a few good Physicians!

Independent Medical Examiners (IMEs) are physicians to whom the Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) can refer an injured worker to a) answer a specific question, b) verify that a given treatment is appropriate, or c) perform an impairment rating. The Commission has need of several IMEs in the specialty of

Cardiology, Otolaryngology (ENT), Ophthalmology, and Urology. The Independent Medical Examiner plays an invaluable role in assisting the Administrative Law Judge to move cases to conclusion quickly. This helps the injured worker to receive benefits in a timely manner. If the Commission is given the name of a physician in Tulsa or Oklahoma City that might be willing to consider this role of IME the Commission will contact that physician and explain the program and attempt to recruit that individual.

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## Employee Spotlight- Valerie Rossiter-Reed

Collin Fowler, Director of Communication and Administration



*This segment of our newsletter is devoted to highlighting some of the wonderful people that work for the WCC. In a very real way the employees of the WCC are at the heart of what defines us. We are a fairly new state agency and the expertise of our staff has helped to build and shape this organization. Their hard work and commitment is what turns the ideas of policy into the reality of administration.*



With a spirit of adventure Valerie Rossiter-Reed left her home in Wichita and moved to Oklahoma City with her sister. Her first job was with a temp agency that placed her in the Records Dept. of the Workers' Comp Court. It was here that she was first introduced to the fascinating world of workers' compensation.

Within a year Valerie had been hired on full time by the court and was moving forward on her career path. Thinking back to her early days Valerie stated, "I began to realize that knowledge will get you somewhere, you just have to know who to ask." With this in mind she moved up the ranks until she found herself as the Docketing Supervisor for the court.

A few years later workers' comp reform was passed and a new state agency was being formed. She said, "I remember I got a call asking if I would like to come work for the Workers' Compensation Commission and help set up their docketing system." Thankfully for the WCC she accepted the position. The challenge going forward for Valerie was taking the tools and software designed for the courts and making it work with the new administrative system. It is also notable to mention that for the first year Valerie was the only employee doing docketing for the commission.

Today our docketing system is up and running thanks in a large part to the hard work and dedication of Valerie Rossiter-Reed. With the addition of Elliot Thompson and Glenda Belvin our docketing staff is moving cases through our system quickly and efficiently.

Valerie related to me that the motivating factor for her job was that, "I know if I don't do my job somebody is out there suffering and waiting." She further explained that, "Docketing is a beast of its own. Our main objective is to get a motion placed on a hearing date and then present the file to the ALJ, and notify all parties."

An additional congratulations is in order for Valerie as she has recently married her best friend and soulmate Eric Reed. They live together with their German Shepard Wolfram,

and enjoy exploring Oklahoma and going on adventures together. Speaking of her new marriage Valerie said, "Life has given us a chance and we are going to take it."

Thanks Valerie for all of your hard work and everything you have done for the Workers' Compensation Commission!

[Communications@wcc.ok.gov](mailto:Communications@wcc.ok.gov)

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