

An important update from...

Oklahoma Workers' Compensation Commission



The Worker's Comp Clarion

Volume 12, December 20th, 2018



The Chairman's Corner

By Mark Liotta, Chairman

Six months ago, when I was appointed as Chairman of the WCC, I expressed to our employees a list of the observations and principles we have tried to include in the way we manage. They are a product of my life lessons and I find them to ring true. I offer them here as insight to our methods.

- **We are doing good things for our State, we have a good story to tell, we must tell it.**

We are all on the ground floor of reforming worker's compensation for the injured worker and Oklahoma businesses. We provide a fair, impartial, unbiased forum for the hearing of

claims. It is a privileged place to be. If we do this right, we can help our State move in the right direction for the next 50-100 years. Everyone here is important to that effort.

I have also found, whenever we leave a blank in understanding, people tend to fill it in, and they fill it in negatively. If we don't blow our own horn, no one else will. So, we are reaching out to the public arena, filling in the blank, and telling our story on your behalf.

- **We are open, public, and accountable.**

Although we are funded from a tax on premiums, and NOT appropriated, the funds we receive and expend are a sacred trust, and accountable. Obviously personnel issues, draft documents, and deliberations are confidential, but there is little else which is to be managed behind closed doors. Our general operations will always be open and public.

- **Know your customer.**

In every process we administer, there is an end customer. Whenever trying to solve a problem, first ask, "Who is the customer?" It may be a coworker, an injured worker, an employer, an insurer, the Legislature, or the media. We provide a quality product in a timely manner **as defined by the customer** whenever possible.

- **"Nothing about us, without us!"**

This is a phrase I have borrowed from an organization of folks with disabilities. They rightly demand they are at the table when policy is written affecting them. Here at the WCC, when we make decisions, it is always best to include a representative sample of those affected by any decision in the discussion. Unless we must act immediately, we will always find a better solution for everyone by including the customer of every decision in the discussion.

- **Know what we measure.**

If we don't measure it, we can't manage it. This doesn't mean we measure everything, we measure key results. Everything which is a factor in a process will be a function of a key measure.

- **We only act for principled reasons.**

We follow processes and policy, we cannot operate in panic mode. If there is a problem, work the process. If no process exists, developing a process IS a part of solving the

problem. Every Commission action should be for a principled reason. If we can't identify an underlying principle, we should question the action. Never hesitate to ask.

- **We don't fix blame, we fix the process.**

We accomplish tasks which are defined by our processes. The more efficient, inclusive, and logical the process, the better we accomplish the task. Sometimes, the right skill set is not represented in a position, or the correct training has not been applied. Correct staffing is an example of a good process.

- **Your loyalty should only be to the law and the truth, never to any individual.**

You owe no loyalty to a Commissioner, agency, legislator, or a Governor. When you are loyal to the law and the truth, everything else will fall in line. Sometimes that takes courage, but it will ALWAYS be the right decision.



Legislative Update

By Commissioner Jordan Russell

Oklahoma has elected a new governor. Fifty-seven (57) of the 101 members of the Oklahoma House of Representatives will be brand new. Eleven (11) of the 48 members of the Oklahoma Senate are new. What I can assure you is that legislative efforts will be in uncharted waters. At their November 15, 2018 regular meeting, the Commissioners discussed items to be included in their annual "cleanup" bill. The

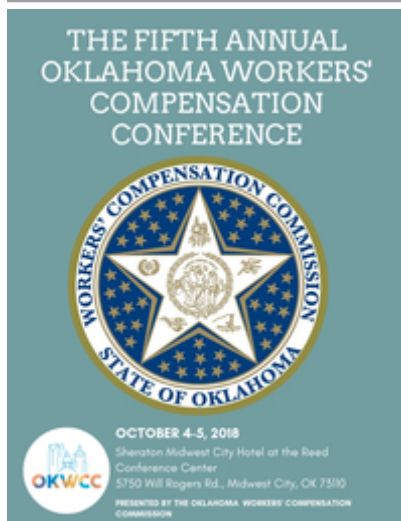
Commissioners discussed that items in any cleanup bill put forth by the Commission should be purely administrative in nature and should not include policy-related changes. Though the Commission has not historically adopted specific language to propose, the discussion ensures that the three Commissioners are on the same page as to what language cleanup is needed and gives direction to those speaking on behalf of the Commission.

Senator Julie Daniels has graciously agreed to introduce a bill to contain the Commission's proposed cleanup language. Newly installed President Pro Tem of the Senate, Greg Treat, has selected Senator Daniels to chair the Senate Judiciary Committee. Workers' compensation bills have traditionally been assigned to the judiciary committees. Senator Daniels is an attorney by trade

representing the Bartlesville area. The Commission looks forward to Senator Daniels's leadership on workers' compensation legislation.

The deadline for introduction of House and Senate bills is Thursday, January 17, 2019 by 4:00 p.m.

On that date we will know what proposals this largely new Legislature has in store for workers' compensation.



Looking Back at our 2018 Conference.

By Collin Fowler, Director of Communication and Administration

As 2018 comes to a close, we remember our 5th annual educational conference and all of our wonderful speakers and sponsors who helped make it a success. This was our first year at the Reed Center and we had a really great turnout at the new venue. We had over 375 attendees and 37 vendor booths at our conference this year. Our new digital sign-in supported by Objectstream was a big hit. The check-in and continuing education credits were all in one easy-to-use portal which could be accessed from a smart phone.

One of the stand-out presentations from the 2018 conference was *The "Opioid Epidemic"* from Dr. Jason Beaman of OSU Center for Health Sciences. His incisive and thought-provoking presentation elicited an enthusiastic response from conference attendees. To everyone who participated in the 2018 WCC Conference, thank you for your continued support. We will strive to make every conference a fun and educational experience. We look forward to seeing you again in 2019.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!



Top row left to right - 1. Gold Sponsor Objectstream; Basil George, Zaida Correa, Angela Guevara, Silvia Checa, Angela Oommen. 2. Gold Sponsor OSSO; Robert Fuxa. 3. Gold Sponsor McBride Orthopedic Hospital; Holly Clanahan.

*Middle row left to right - 4. Case Law/ Medical Evidence Panel; Dr. Jay Cannon, ALJ Mike Egan, ALJ P. Blair McMillin, ALJ Molly Lawyer, Mark Liotta. 5. Chairman Mark Liotta presenting *Results of the 2013 Reform*.*

*Bottom row left to right - 6. Bronze Sponsor Corvel; RaNisha Willingham 7. Dr. Jason Beaman presenting *The Opioid Epidemic*. 8. Silver Sponsor Oklahoma Surgical Hospital; Cheryl King-Reeder.*



Scenes from the 2018 WCC Educational Conference.

Center: Wade Christensen and Commissioner Jordan Russell

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS

GOLD SPONSORS



SILVER SPONSORS



BRONZE SPONSORS



Employee Spotlight

By Collin Fowler, Director of Communication and Administration

This segment of our newsletter is devoted to highlighting some of the wonderful people who work for the WCC. It is important to note, the Commission is more than the dour, grey walls of the Denver Davison Building, or even the laws which created the Commission. In a very real way, the employees of the WCC are at the heart of what defines us. Their hard work and commitment is what turns the lofty ideas of policy into the reality of administration. Here we examine the parts to appreciate the whole.

When you visit the WCC records counter, chances are you will see the smiling face of Tammy Matyjasek. She is here every day filing forms, taking copy payments, and presenting an excellent point of contact with the public. It may surprise you to know, this

mild-mannered government employee moonlights as the singer for a rock 'n' roll band! Tammy has been singing professionally since she was 16. She got her start singing with country music bands. Her mother would go with her to any of her shows held in bars. After she finished school, she traveled with a band called "*Rat's Magic*". They cut an album and toured the country; but they never really made it in the tough music industry. After a few years on the road, Tammy met her husband, Dale Matyjasek, and decided to settle down. But, she never gave up her love of playing music. Tammy and Dale decided to start a new band called *Nothing Sacred*. This group played gigs around the Oklahoma City area for the next 22 years, but eventually split up. In recent years Tammy and Dale have joined a new band called *Hook Echo*. You can see them play Dec. 29th at the Alley Club. Tammy also related to me another interesting fact about herself besides being a singer in a rock 'n' roll band. She happens to be a direct descendant of a famous Oklahoma Governor. Her great-grandfather was none-other-than William H. Murray (colloquially known as "Alfalfa Bill"). Alfalfa Bill was a delegate to the convention for the proposed State of Sequoyah, a delegate and president of the 1906 constitutional convention for the proposed State of Oklahoma, The first Speaker of the Oklahoma House of Representatives, our State's 9th Governor, and father of the 14th Governor, Johnston Murray. She and her family were invited to represent Alfalfa Bill Murray at an event celebrating all of the living governors of Oklahoma.

We are very fortunate to have such a well-rounded and interesting person working with us here at the Commission. Thank you Tammy for all of your great work!



Tammy Matyjasek Performing at the Alley Club



Data Shows 2013 Workers' Comp Reform Works.

By Collin Fowler, Director of Communication and Administration

For the fourth consecutive year since the WCC was created by the Oklahoma Legislature, "lost costs" for workers' compensation have fallen. The National Council on Compensation Insurance (NCCI) calculates "lost costs." This is the number insurers use to set workers' comp premiums. Aggregate insurance premiums in Oklahoma have dropped an average of 31.6% from 2014 to 2018.

Chairman Mark Liotta of the WCC Explains, "The reduction of insurance premiums in Oklahoma has resulted in a savings of over \$300 million for Oklahoma Businesses, Municipalities, and even Oklahoma Schools. This \$300 million has been invested in needs other than workers' comp insurance."

A study issued by the State of Oregon showed Oklahoma had the highest rising premium rates in the country from 2008 to 2012. After the 2013 Reforms went into effect, Oregon issued another study in 2016. Oklahoma had completely swapped positions, and had risen to the fastest dropping premium rates in the country! These trends are projected to continue with the latest findings from the NCCI report.

An interesting result of the 2013 reform efforts is this; as premium rates drop, the funding for the WCC (which is tied to a tax on premium rates) also drops. This affects the amount of non-appropriated funding the WCC and the Court of Existing Claims (CEC) use to fund operations. Hopper Smith, Executive Director, of the WCC says, “We continue to find ways to increase efficiencies and use available technology to reduce costs, and still provide excellent service to the public.”

The WCC is currently presenting results of the reform to local groups and organizations in Oklahoma. If you are interested in hearing this presentation, contact communications@wcc.ok.gov.



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



Stay Connected with Oklahoma Workers' Compensation Commission: