

Contact: Mark Costello 405 850-1070

Date: April 19, 2011

For: Immediate Release

Media Release

## **Costello Calls for Retaining the People's Vote through Runoff Primary Election Process**

Oklahoma City - In a letter to Members of the Legislature, Oklahoma Labor Commissioner Mark Costello voiced opposition to legislation that eliminates the Runoff Primary Election. SB602 provides changes that enable military personnel to participate in the candidate selection process; however, the measure was amended to eliminate the people's vote in the runoff election process and instead creates a winner-take-all-primary.

"I support the right of the people to fully participate in the selection of political candidates for public office. Accommodating those who serve in our military can be provided without eliminating the people's right to vote. Service men and women are making the ultimate sacrifice to insure our democratic election process. The measure the Oklahoma Legislature is now considering would eliminate the people's right to vote by terminating the runoff election," said Costello.

Costello offered an election schedule alternative that provides for the needed 45-day absentee ballot transmission process and continues with the Runoff Primary Election. Costello suggests holding the filing period in the first full week in June, the Primary Election on the last Tuesday in July, and the Runoff Primary Election on the second Tuesday in September.

"Historically, if the top vote getter in the primary were the nominee, neither Oklahoma's most influential Congressmen, Carl Albert, nor former Governor and Senator David Boren would have been nominated without the runoff primary election. Mary Fallin would not have become our first female Lt. Governor. David Walters and Brad Henry would not have become governor. Incumbent Senators Charles Wyrick, Susan Paddock, Clark Jolley, John Sparks, Gary Stanislawski and Ralph Shortey and Representatives Gus Blackwell, Marian Cooksey, and John Enns would not have been their parties' nominees. Most recently, when voters took a hard look at Insurance Commissioner candidate John Crawford, the voters awarded him with only 29% of the vote in the runoff election after having secured 42% in the primary," concluded Costello.

Costello urged legislators to amend SB602 to retain the people's right to vote in the Runoff Primary election.