Oklahoma Politics

2025 • VOLUME 35

OKLAHOMA POLITICAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION

Oklahoma Politics, an annual publication of the Oklahoma Political Science Association, published articles, research notes, and book reviews that have a significant Oklahoma component. For inquiries, email David Searcy, david.searcy@swosu.edu.

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Cover photo: Oklahoma City Memorial, Carol M. Highsmith
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Oklahoma Politics

2025 **Volume 35**

Oklahoma Politics is an annual publication of the Oklahoma Political Science Association. We encourage the submission of papers, research notes, and book reviews that are meaningfully related to Oklahoma. For inquiries, contact the Editor in Chief David Searcy. Email: david.searcy@swosu.edu.

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OKLAHOMA POLITICS
VOL. 35 / November 2025

ARTICLES

BOOK REVIEWS

STATEMENT FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the most recent issue of *Oklahoma Politics.* I am new to the position of Editor and thought that I should introduce myself. My name is David Searcy. I am a professor of Political Science at Southwestern Oklahoma State University (SWOSU). I have been on the job for a couple of months and hope to continue the standard of quality that you expect from *Oklahoma Politics.*

I wanted to begin this by issuing a series of thanks. Thank you to Dr. Ananga who I am following in this position. Editing a Journal is a rewarding experience. It is also a challenging one. Anyone who has had to try and wrangle reviewers over the Summer knows how difficult it can be. Dr. Ananga did this job in an excellent and professional manner, and I want to thank him for that work.

Additionally, I want to thank Dr. Christine Pappas who has been an invaluable resource over the past couple of months. In addition to working on the Book Reviews she has been the person who helped me with the mechanics of deadlines and timetables. That you are holding a Journal is a testament to both. If you find something you dislike in this edition, then place the blame with me.

I also want to thank the authors and reviewers for their work. Without submissions and without reviewers to improve those submissions there is no *Oklahoma Politics.* Anyone who has done this work knows how challenging it is. I want to thank everyone involved for their work. That work never ends. I am already thinking of the next issue of *Oklahoma Politics* and would love to see submissions from you. Below you will see submission guidelines. Please consider submitting your work this coming year. I would love to read it.

Finally… Thank you for reading.

The peer-reviewed journal *Oklahoma Politics* publishes articles, research notes, and book reviews that have a significant Oklahoma political, social, and environmental related issue. Consequently, we consider work that addresses practical methods and make significant contributions to scholarly knowledge about theoretical concerns, empirical issues, or methodological strategies in the subfield of Political Science and or environmental politics in the State of Oklahoma. Manuscripts submitted for review should address an important research problem and or question, display a modest level of creativity and or innovation in research, contribute in a significant fashion to a body of knowledge, and lastly, demonstrate the use of appropriate quantitative and or qualitative methods.

Our core concern is to ensure that we provide a platform for authors from Oklahoma and their collaborators from around the United States and around the world to inform the larger scientific community of current political science and environmental politics related research issues in the state. All manuscripts submitted for publication in our journal are thoroughly reviewed by anonymous referees. The submitted manuscripts first goes through a detailed check including a plagiarism check. The editor together with the editorial office takes charge of the review process.

When a manuscript is accepted for full review, the editor will collect at least two review comments and prepare a decision letter based on the comments of the reviewers. The decision letter is sent to the Corresponding Author to request an adequate revision after which the manuscript is forwarded for eventual publication. If you would like to publish your research in *Oklahoma Politics*, please submit your paper for peer-review at: david.searcy@swosu.edu

David Searcy
Editor, Oklahoma Politics

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

GENERAL

Oklahoma Politics invites submissions that explore the broad context of politics affecting Oklahoma and its place in the surrounding region. We are especially interested in submissions that bring to bear a variety of methodological, analytical, and disciplinary perspectives on state and local politics of the central-south region of the United States: Oklahoma, Kansas, Colorado, New Mexico, Texas, Arkansas, and Louisiana. Because "politics" cannot be thoroughly explored from only a single disciplinary point of view, trans-disciplinary and collaborative projects are encouraged. Though we are the journal of the Oklahoma Political Science Association, we encourage submissions from historians, economists, sociologists, environmental scientists, policymakers, analysts, as well as political scientists and practitioners whose substantive research bears on the politics and issues of the state and region.

Oklahoma Politics is a fully peer-reviewed journal. Each submission receives at least three anonymous reviews and each is reviewed by the editors before a decision is made to accept a manuscript for publication.

MANUSCRIPTS

Manuscripts should be no longer than 30 pages or more than 9,000 words, double-spaced; text, graphics, notes, and references included; no extra space between paragraphs. Do not indent paragraphs. Type font: Times New Roman; 12 point. Notes should be footnotes, not endnotes, and references should be the last part of the manuscript. Graphics (tables and figures count 300 words) submitted separately, one per page, with internal reference indicating the approximate placement in the body of the text (i.e.: "[Table 1 about here]"). Tables/figures must not be larger than a single page.

INTERNAL NOTE STYLE

Footnotes, sequentially numbered superscript (e.g. [1, 2, 3, 4]).

Internal reference style: (author last name year); e.g. (Jefferson 2007).

Internal reference with page number: (author last name year, page #); e.g. (Jefferson 2007, 32). Multiple internal references separated by semi-colon; alphabetical first, then by year: (Author A 2007; Author B 1994; Author CA1 2007; Author CA2 1992).

REFERENCE AND NOTE STYLE

Manuscripts and book reviews must follow the APSA Chicago Manual of Style or Style Manual of Political Science. These format and citation styles can be found in the journals of the American Political Science Association: American Political Science Review, Perspectives on Politics, and PS: Political Science &Politics.

Examples

Journals: Author last, author first or initial. Date. "Article Title." Publication Volume (Number): Page-Page. Example: Budge, Ian. 1973. "Recent Legislative Research: Assumptions and Strategies." European Journal of Political Research 1 (4): 317- 330.

Books: Author last, author first or initial. Date. Title. Publication City: Publisher. Example: Green, Donald, and Ian Shapiro. 1994. Pathologies of Rational Choice Theory. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

GUIDELINES FOR CITING CHAPTERS AND WEBSITES

Chapters

Author last, author first or initial. Date. "Chapter Title." In Book Title, ed. Book Author First, Last. Publication City: Publisher. Example: Mezey, Michael L. 1991. "Studying Legislatures: Lessons for Comparing Russian Experience." In Democratization in Russia: The Development of Legislative Institutions, ed. W.H. Jeffrey.

New York: M.E. Sharpe.

Websites
Author last, author first or initial. Date. "Publication Title." (Last Access Date). Example: Collins, Paul. 2005. "Data Management in Stata." http://www.psci.unt.edu/~pmcollins/ Data%20 Management%20in%20Stata.pdf (September 16, 2016).

TABLE & FIGURE STYLE GUIDELINES
Each table or figure must fit on a single page. Authors must submit tables and figures in appropriate format.

Table 1: Similarities Between Oklahoma and West Virginia

	Mean*	**SD**
Not Term Limited (n=72)	2.4	7.5
Term Limited (n=28)	5.0	8.6
Majority Party	Republican	Republican
* Difference significant at the .10 level		

ORGANIZATIONAL/HEADINGS
Major Section Head (Bold Caps & Centered)

SUBSECTION HEAD (CAPS & LEFT: NO PERIOD)
Sub-sub Section Head (Title Caps, Left, & Italicized; No Period)

MANUSCRIPT SUBMISSION
Manuscripts must contain: a cover page with title, author, and author affiliation and contact information; a separate cover page with title only; an abstract of no more than 150 words and the text of the manuscript. Authors whose manuscripts are accepted for publication must submit a short biographical sketch for inclusion in the journal.

BOOK REVIEWS

Book reviews should be no longer than 1500 words. Reviews should be of books on topics relevant to the journal as delineated in the Submission Guidelines. Review style should follow that of the journal as a whole. Full bibliographic information should be included as the lead to the review.

Manuscripts (or ideas for manuscripts) should be emailed to: David Searcy, Editor in Chief, Oklahoma Political Science Association - Southwestern Oklahoma State University, 100 Campus Drive, Weatherford, OK 73096. Email: david.searcy@swosu.edu.

Book Reviews (or ideas for book reviews) should be emailed to: Christine Pappas, Book Review Editor, Oklahoma Politics, East Central University. Email: cpappas@ecok.edu. Telephone: 580-559-5640

PAPERS AND BOOK REVIEWS

They must be submitted electronically, in either Microsoft Word 2003 (or later) format (.doc/.docx) or Rich Text Format (rtf). No other forms of submission will be accepted. Manuscripts of papers not in format compliance will be returned without review.

CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHT TO FARM AMENDMENTS AND OKLAHOMA SQ 777

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ABSTRACT

Oklahoma voters defeated a right to farm amendment (State Question 777) to the state constitution in November 2016. Using data collected at the county-level, this paper examines the vote on SQ 777 to determine what lessons can be identified in the defeat. Media reports intimated that SQ 777 found weaker support in more urban counties and in those rural counties with more water resources. Counties with larger Native American populations also tended to exhibit more No votes. This paper uses OLS regression to better understand the electoral outcome presented by the Oklahoma media.

INTRODUCTION

On November 7, 2023. Texas became the fourth state to consider adding a right to farm amendment to the state constitution. Right to farm amendments are emerging as "the newest trend in an evolution of laws aimed at protecting farming and ranching across the United States, largely in response to unprecedented efforts to restrict and regulate agriculture." (Overstreet-Akins 2016, 86). Most states have right-farm-laws (see Ashwood, *et al.* 2023). The second decade of the 21st Century saw the innovative of enshrining right-to-farm in state constitutions.

North Dakota enacted the North Dakota Farming and Ranching Amendment, a citizen-initiated constitutional amendment, in 2012. The amendment received support from 66.89 percent of voters[1] A right to farm amendment appeared on the 2014 Missouri ballot as a legislatively referred amendment. Missouri voters approved the amendment by a slight margin, winning 50.12 percent to 49.88 percent (Russell and Hall 2022, 94). Oklahoma voters rejected a legislatively referred amendment (SQ 777) in 2016 with only 39.7 percent of voters approving the measure.[2] Texas voters approved an amendment "to establish a right to farming, ranching, timber production, horticulture, and wildlife management on owned or leased personal property" in 2023. The vote on Proposition 1, a legislatively referred amendment, was not close with 79 percent of voters approving the measure (Ballotpedia, 2023).

The present research examines Oklahoma's experience with SQ 777 in order to help inform the development of theories about direct democracy defeats. The basic research question is why did Oklahoma's SQ 777 fail? While right-to-farm statutory law is well-studied (Ashwood, *et al.* 2023), there is little research literature on right-to-farm constitutional amendments. There are, however, a number of post-mortems of the 2016 election published in Oklahoma media accounts. This paper plumbs those post-mortems

for lessons for future states seeking to add right to farm amendments to their constitutions. This paper also adds to the growing body of state-specific research on direct democracy in Oklahoma (see Farmer and Rader 2009).

STATE QUESTION 777 – OKLAHOMA RIGHT TO FARM AMENDMENT

SQ 777 was one of seven measures certified to appear on the November 8, 2016, general election ballot (Ballotpedia 2016). The amendment was introduced by Representative Scott Biggs, a Republican from Chickasha, in April 2015. The measure cruised to easy passage in the House of Representatives by a vote of 85 to 7 and in the Senate by a vote of 39 to 6. (Oklahoma Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture 2016). The amendment was modeled on previous efforts in North Dakota and Missouri (Perry 2016). SQ 777 was filed with the Secretary of State on April 30, 2015. The legislature's initial ballot title was rejected by the Attorney General. In June 2015, Attorney General Scott Pruitt prepared the Final Ballot Title for SQ 777 (Oklahoma Legislature 2015). Voters encountered the following:

> STATE QUESTION NO. 777
> LEGISLATIVE REFERENDUM NO. 368
>
> This measure adds Section 38 to Article II of the Oklahoma Constitution. The new Section creates state constitutional rights. It creates the following guaranteed rights to engage in farming and ranching:
> • The right to make use of agricultural technology,
> • The right to make use of livestock procedures, and
> • The right to make use of ranching practices.
>
> These constitutional rights receive extra protection under this measure that not all constitutional rights receive. This extra protection is a limit on lawmakers' ability to interfere with the exercise of these rights. Under this extra protection, no law can interfere with

these rights, unless the law is justified by a compelling state interest of the highest order. Additionally, the law must be necessary to serve that compelling state interest. The measure-and the protections identified above-do not apply to and do not impact state laws related to:

- Trespass,
- Eminent domain,
- Dominance of mineral interests,
- Easements,
- Right of way or other property rights, and
- Any state statutes and political subdivision ordinances enacted before December 2014.

FOR THE PROPOSAL – YES
AGAINST THE PROPOSAL - NO[3]

On June 29, 2015, Governor Mary Fallin issued a proclamation placing SQ 777 on the ballot at the general election held on November 8, 2016.

A coalition of ecological groups filed a lawsuit claiming SQ 777 was unconstitutional. The plaintiffs argued that the Right to Farm, if enacted, would allow for unregulated waste dumping and the abuse of animals.[4] Without ruling on the constitutionality of the amendment, the Supreme Court allowed the measure to appear on the November 2016 ballot.[5]

Governor Fallin's proclamation launched a spirited campaign. Yes on 777 spearheaded the campaign in support of the state question. Individuals supporting the proposal included Senator James Inhofe and former Senator Tom Coburn, both Republicans. The Oklahoma Farm Bureau, the Oklahoma Pork Council, the Oklahoma Cotton Council, The Poultry Federation, and Oklahoma Agri-Women were a few organizations that supported the proposal. Campaign funds were raised by the Oklahoma Farmers Care SQ 777 Political Action Committee. In total, the PAC raised $1,705,213 and spent

$1,691,769 on campaign activities. The *Sooner Politics* editorial board appears to be the only major media outlet in support of SQ 777 (Ballotpedia 2016). Supporters stressed that the amendment would allow continued freedom to farm.

Arrayed against rural and agricultural interests was a group organized by the Oklahoma Stewardship Council. Opponents included several Democratic members of the Oklahoma Legislature and Cindy Simon Rosenthal, the mayor of Norman. A number of Native American nations and organizations worked in opposition to the measure including the Cherokee Nation, the Chickasaw Nation, and the Intertribal Council of the Five Civilized Tribes. Other organizations working to stop the amendment were the National Wildlife Federation, the Humane Society of the United States and its Legislative Fund[6], Trout Unlimited, and the Young Democrats of Oklahoma. A number of municipalities passed resolutions opposing the measure. These included the cities of Oklahoma City, Tulsa, Norman, Edmond, Tahlequah, and Muskogee, among others. The Oklahoma Stewardship Council raised $1,513,198 and spent $1,519,192. A second political action committee, Oklahoma Food, Farm, & Family, raised $935,980 and expended the same. The *Journal Record*, the *Norman Transcript*, The *Oklahoman*, and the *Tulsa World* editorialized against SQ 777 (Ballotpedia 2016). Legendary Oklahoma Sooners football coach Barry Switzer publicly opposed the proposal.[7] Opponents blasted SQ 777 as allowing the freedom to harm. Former Oklahoma Attorney General Drew Edmondson, a Democrat, was a leading spokesman against SQ 777. He framed the argument in the *Red Dirt News*:

> *The world of industrial agriculture is changing with chemical additives to feed, growth hormones and genetic modifications. I can understand why they want to be free from scrutiny and regulation, but I cannot understand why we should let them.*

Edmondson also said, "This question should have been named right to harm and been numbered 666" (Russell 2016). It is clear that the constitutional amendment proposed by State Question

777 would have been characterized as limiting government, specifically local governments (Farmer and Rader 2009, 81). This is particularly interesting as Farmer and Rader "suggest that once on the ballot, issues restricting government have a better chance of passing" (2009, 81). SQ 777 was a legislatively-referred constitutional amendment.

As election day neared, public opinion polls began to uncover weakening support for SQ 777 among the electorate. *The Sooner Poll* found that support for the proposal slipped from about 49 percent to 37 percent a few weeks before the election (Shapard 2016; Wertz 2016).

The public debate on SQ 777 campaign pitted "Freedom to Farm" against "Freedom to Harm". On November 8, 2016, Oklahoma voters defeated the proposal with only 39.7 percent of voters in support. Several observers found interesting patterns evident in the distribution of votes across the state of Oklahoma.[8] The present research seeks to better understand these patterns as well as see if a model may be built that will help predict the vote on similar constitutional amendments in other states.

METHOD

To better understand the voting patterns exhibited in the vote on SQ 777, this paper replicates a method used by Morgan and Meier (1980) in their study of voting on moral issues in Oklahoma. Morgan and Meier use multiple regression analysis to study the county-level vote on several Oklahoma ballot questions. Their dependent variable was the percentage of each county's voters who supported the state question under examination. They used a number of independent variables including rural isolation, socioeconomic status, liquor consumption, and three categories of religious affiliation. Despite the method's relative simplicity and the level at which the data are aggregated, Morgan and Meier's method has been used in a number of different types of studies, includ-

ing additional research examining morality (Gibson 2004; Haider-Markel and Meier 1996; LeDuc and Pammett 1995; Oldmixon 2002; Rausch and Rausch 2020; Satterthwaite 2005a, 2005b; Wilcox and Jelen 1990) as well as constitutional amendments on state legislative operations (Rausch 1994).

Research literature on voting for state constitutional rights to farm is scant. The present research is driven by hypotheses derived from comments found in media accounts of the vote on SQ 777. Several media explanations noted that the state question fared poorest in more densely populated areas (Wertz and Layden 2016). Several groups formed an alliance to oppose SQ 777 because of a concern about unregulated agricultural production and its effect on the state's water supply (Layden 2016b). "Many of the state's largest Native American nations also oppose SQ 777," primarily because of water resource concerns (Layden 2016b).

Using the information gathered from media reports, we should find that a regression analysis will show that rural counties will exhibit greater support for SQ 777 unless they have significant water supplies and larger Native American populations.

We assess this hypothesis using data collected from a variety of sources while testing for other explanations of support for SQ 777. Data were collected on each of the 77 counties in Oklahoma.

Research on Colorado's 1996 parental rights amendment presents evidence of the conditions needed for an initiative to fail. The amendment was placed on the Colorado ballot as a citizen initiative designed to "add to the list of inalienable rights found in the (Colorado) state constitution, the right of parents to 'direct and control the upbringing, education, values, and discipline of their children (Smith and Herrington 2000, 179). The initiative was defeated by Colorado voters. The researchers argue that while the initiative was popular at the start of the campaign, opponents were able to control the narrative in the campaign (Smith and Her-

rington 2000, 191). In the present research, we are only able to hint at the narrative. A longer and more complete analysis will include a content analysis of campaign messages delivered in the Oklahoma news media.

The present research employs aggregate data collected at the county level. While individual-level data collected by a survey would be preferable to county-level data, the level of aggregation chosen is more practical and will allow for future comparisons across states. The reliability of the data is much greater than a survey because of issues of respondent recall (Murphy, et al. 2020). County-level data are useful for examining the political, economic, and social environment in which voters make their decisions on referenda (Giles 1977; Hero 1998; Key 1950; Morgan and Meier 1980; Oliver and Mendelberg 2000; Rausch 1994; Rausch and Rausch 2020; Satterthwaite 2005a, 2005b; Smith, DeSantis, and Kassel 2005; Tolbert and Hero 2001).

Election return data are found on the Oklahoma State Election Board website (https://oklahoma.gov/elections.html). Demographic data are from the United States Census. The information on water resources was derived the Gazetter Files available from the United Census Bureau (https://www.census.gov/geographies/reference-files/time-series/geo/gazetteer-files.html).

MEASURES

SUPPORT FOR STATE QUESTION 777

The dependent variable, support for SQ 777, is measured by the percentage of voters in each of the 77 Oklahoma counties who cast a ballot in favor of the state question. The highest percentage of "Yes" votes was 79.28 percent in Roger Mills County in western Oklahoma. The lowest support was 28.57 percent in Tulsa County in the northeastern part of the state. The mean county vote was 52.56 percent with a standard deviation of 12.12 percent. Please note that the strongest support for SQ 777 came from counties

with fewer voters.

POPULATION DENSITY

The present research uses population density as a measure of a county's rurality (Gimple, Lovin, May, and Reeves, 2020). This measure is a new way to look at the rural/urban divide and it provides a useful continuous variable to use in regression equations. The data are drawn from the United States Census. Population density by county in Oklahoma ranged from 1.22 persons per square mile (Cimarron County) to 1,154.30 persons per square mile (Tulsa County). The mean population density is 72.14 persons per square mile with a standard deviation of 187.61.

PERCENT WATER AREA

Percent water area is measured using data on the percent of the area of a county covered by water. The county with the least area covered by water is Ellis County at 0.03 percent. McIntosh County has the most area covered by water at 13.17 percent. The mean water area 2.12 percent with a standard deviation of 2.43.

NATIVE AMERICAN POPULATION

The percentage of each county's population identifying as Native American was found in Census data. The county with the least Native American population is Cimarron County with 1.2 percent. The county with the most Native American residents is Adair County with 45.7 percent. The mean county Native American population is 11.66 percent with a standard deviation of 8.36.

POLITICAL VARIABLES

Two political variables were included in the model as controls. The first is a measure of party identification. While Oklahomans identify their political party affiliation when registering to vote, we use the vote for Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump. The vote on SQ 777 occurred at the same election as the 2016 presidential election. In addition, it is likely that many Democrats, dissatisfied with their party's nominee, voted for the Republican

candidate. Voters in Oklahoma County provided the least support to Trump with 51.68 percent while Cimarron County exhibited the most support at 89.25 percent. The mean county vote for the Republican was 75.41 percent with a standard deviation of 7.62.

Another variable included as a control was turnout. In Oklahoma, State Questions usually appear on the ballot with other candidate races. The vote on SQ 777 was no different. It is difficult to determine if the SQ 777 drove the turnout. It is interesting to note that 1,452,992 Oklahomans voted for President while 1,434,495 cast a ballot on SQ 777. Bryan County had the least turnout with 53.45 percent while Adair County led the state with 76.52 percent voting. The mean turnout was 66.48 percent with a standard deviation of 4.75.

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The present research seeks to understand the vote on State Question 777 in which Oklahoma voters defeated a proposal to enact a right to farm amendment into the state constitution. In order to allay any concerns about multicollinearity and determine of there are any potential relationships between the independent variables, a correlation matrix was produced for the independent variables.

The matrix exhibited few surprises. Donald Trump did well in counties with lower population densities. We also see that counties with larger Native American populations had lower voter turnout.

Table 1: Correlation Between Selected Independent Variables

	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)
(a) Percent Water	1				
(b) Population Density	.043	1			
(c) Native American Population	.308**	-.120	1		
(d) Percent Vote for Trump	-.210	-.588**	-.302**	1	
(e) Turnout	-.139	.020	-.388**	.277*	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

An ordinary least squares regression model was calculated. The results are presented in Table 2. The variables included in the model are water area, the county population density, the percent of each county claiming to be Native American, the county vote for Trump, and the turnout percent. The model explains 55 percent of the variance in the county vote in support of SQ 777. The model is statistically significant.

Table 2: OLS Regression of County Vote on State Question 777

	Beta	p
% Water Area	-.171	.039
Population Density	-.246	.020
% Native American Population	-.349	<.001
% Vote for Trump	.420	<.001
% Turnout	-.192	.028
	R^2 = .581 Adj. R^2 = .551 p = <.001	

The model presents two strong associations. The first is a strong, negative relationship between Native American population and support for SQ 777. Counties with larger Native American populations exhibited lower support for the state question. The other association is a positive one between vote for Trump and support for SQ 777. The challenge for supporters of SQ 777 is that Trump voters tend to live in rural areas and that rural areas tend to have smaller populations. The positive relationship does not appear to have made a significant difference in the statewide outcome for SQ 777.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The present research seeks to understand the relationship between geography and politics and support for a constitutional right to farm in Oklahoma. This paper finds that the observers who published in the Oklahoma media after the election were accurate: geography matters! Rural areas supported SQ 777, but not all rural areas. Some counties with larger water supplies as well as larger Native American populations had more negative voters than one would expect in rural counties. For this reason, this "deep dive" in the election results is useful even if it produced a model that explains only slightly more than half the variance. The challenge in creating a model with more explanatory power is the possibility of introducing multicollinearity.

The primary lesson learned from Oklahoma's experience with State Question 777 is that it is possible to defeat a constitutional right to farm at the polls. Opponents spent money to mobilize their voters and the voters did their job. With significant resources, opponents were able to control the narrative of the campaign. As more states consider constitutional right to farm amendments, we will be able to collect more data on who votes to support these measures.

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THE UNIVERSITY EFFECT: THE POLITICAL IMPACT OF OU ON NORMAN, OKLAHOMA

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ABSTRACT

This paper probes the effect of the University of Oklahoma on the politics of Norman, Oklahoma. Election results from between 2010-2024 are examined to contrast outcomes in Norman versus county and state outcomes. Elections analyzed include President and Vice President, Governor, United States Senator, United States Representative (District 4), State Senator (Districts 15, 16, 24) and State Representative (Districts 20, 44, 45, 46) as well as straight party voting. The City of Norman votes more Democratically in nearly 90% of elections than the statewide average and is more than 10% more likely to vote for Democratic candidates than the rest of the state. It is theorized that the Democratic preferences stem from the voting patterns of OU faculty, staff, and students, as well as the liberalizing effect of OU on city residents.

I. INTRODUCTION

A hot topic that has been brought to light by the media in recent years has been the developing education gap between the Democratic and Republican Parties in the United States. This gap has seemed to appear in the last decade and in the 2022 election, 51% of Democratic Voters held a bachelor's degree or higher, in contrast to 37% of Republican voters (Goldberg 2023, Pew Research 2023). Near the same time as this educational shift, a different shift was emerging in the State of Oklahoma. Oklahoma began its shift into the Republican powerhouse that it is today in the early to mid 2000's (Gaddie and Buchanan, 1998; Hart, 2023). Despite this shift, an outlier suburban city has seemed to resist the trend of the rest of the State, Norman. Norman does not have many of the typical markers for a Democratically dominant city yet in several recent elections a majority of its precincts light up blue on election day maps. This paper seeks to prove that the reason for this in-state partisan shift is the presence of The University of Oklahoma within Norman's city limits.

The literature review examines Oklahoma's political history as well as several current factors such as age, out of state move ins and the social capital that they create that may influence voting trends on individual and group levels utilizing census data and enrollment data collected from The University of Oklahoma. The methods section explains how historical context was used to select the time frame of 2010 to 2024 and which offices were chosen to analyze. The analysis formats the findings in a side-by-side comparison of Norman election results with county and statewide election results, complete with graphs of each election. Finally, the conclusion provides additional context into reasons why The City of Norman votes more Democratically in nearly 90% of elections than the statewide average and has voted for the Democratic candidate by over 10% more than the rest of the state.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The State of Oklahoma has historically been a political oddity. While seemingly politically aligned with the traditional South in many ways, the shift in support from the Democratic to the Republican Party in Oklahoma seems to have its unique reasons. Despite only voting Democratically in one Presidential election since 1960, Lyndon Johnson 1964, The Democratic party remained competitive and, in many ways, dominant in the state winning elections for State and National elected offices from statehood until 2010, when all offices were won by The Republican candidate for the first time and Republican dominance began to take shape (Gaddie and Buchanan, 1998; Hardt, 2021; Alberty, Dowdle, and Hartney, 2014). Since this shift in dominance, Oklahoma has gained attention locally and nationally for its extremely conservative political views. It has begun to be known as the state with zero blue counties in Presidential elections. Despite this stereotype most of Oklahoma proudly adheres to, if you begin to look into the election results, especially in Oklahoma' largest three counties: Oklahoma, Tulsa, and Cleveland which combined have over 1,800,000 more than a third of Oklahoma's population of 4.1 million, the races are closer than you might be led to believe.

Oklahoma's largest two counties, Oklahoma and Tulsa, which also contain the state's largest two cities, Oklahoma City and Tulsa, follow the national trend of large cities urban areas typically favoring the Democratic Party, so while not ultimately winning in these counties in national races, the Democratic candidate tends to perform the best in these counties which aligns due to both cities having a population larger than 400,000 and being considered major cities (Caplan, 2021; Florida, 2013; Pew Research Center, 2023). Oklahoma's third largest county, Cleveland with a population of 304,611 is half as large as the next closest county and its largest city Norman's population is barely a fourth of the Oklahoma's two largest and most liberal cities at 130,046 yet in re-

cent elections Cleveland County has voted just as liberal if not more than Oklahoma and Tulsa Counties, with the city of Norman having even higher numbers of Democratic votes than the county alone (U.S. Census Bureau, 2025).

COLLEGE TOWNS AND THE POLITICAL SHIFT LEFT:

This project's goal is to pinpoint exactly how the city of Norman votes in elections compared to Statewide preferences, as well as to isolate some of the possible reasons why the citizens of Norman may or may not vote so drastically different from their other Oklahomans. I hypothesize that Norman votes more democratically in elections due to the influence and presence of the University of Oklahoma.

An explanation for Norman's political preference that differs from the majority of the state could lie not just in its population, which is relatively small compared to the States two largest cities but in Norman being the home to Oklahoma's largest university, The University of Oklahoma which is said to be "The Heart of the Town." A trend is emerging in college towns across the United States, where political shifts have been pronounced. According to Politico, "two-thirds of college counties have grown more Democratic since 2000".Mahtesian & Alexander, 2023, np). Universities, along with their faculty and young students who have also tended to vote more liberal, play a significant role in shaping these towns into desirable locations for highly educated Democratic voters, many of whom are relocating from more conservative areas seeking a high quality of life and the presence of like-minded individuals (Mahtesian & Alexander, 2023; Mariani and Hewitt, 2008).

FACULTY AND STUDENT INFLUENCE ON VOTING PATTERNS:

Since the beginnings of organized higher education, faculty of these universities have tended to be liberal and progressive thinkers whose ideologies that more so align with the modern-day Dem-

ocratic party (Magness and Waugh, 2022; Gross and Fosse, 2012). The University of Oklahoma alone employees 2,186 researchers and faculty members as of 2024 and research suggests professors today are on average as much as four times as likely to identify as a liberal than the average American, with professors teaching disciplines that require extensive research and independent thinking such as the hard sciences or liberal arts having even higher levels of liberalism than professors of business subjects that tend to vote more conservative (Mariani and Hewitt, 2008).

Obviously, these professors and researchers are not the only people influencing the vote in Norman; perhaps the most important piece to this puzzle is the students. Over 22,000 students are enrolled at The University of Oklahoma's main campus in Norman and account for 20.5% of the city's population. Each one of these students is bringing with them their own thoughts, ideas, and opinions that others would never otherwise hear or think about without being a part of the community at the University of Oklahoma. As a group, Gen Z and Millennials vote more liberally than past generations already and this social capital created by higher education is one of the leading theories along with how higher education teaches students to think critically, have more complex vocabulary, and have a higher net income is why a majority of all voters with a Bachelor's degree or higher resonate with the democratic party and that this gap in preference has grown by 20.5% since 2008 (Goldberg, 2023; Pew Research Center, 2023; Apfeld et al, 2023).

While Norman certainly has a strong student population, a major issue facing Oklahoma elections is young student voters deciding not to vote. The age group with the least amount of voter turnout is consistently ages 18-24, which some scholars cite as lack of competition between races leading many students to feel like their vote doesn't matter not just for younger voters but everyone in the state, as Oklahoma has the lowest voter turnout in the country (Hardt, 2024; Ross, 2023; Murphy, 2024). Despite this dip in young voter turnout, students in college as well as graduates vote

in much higher numbers than voters who never attended college. This has been observed to be due to engagement in on-campus activities, education on voting, and a sense of community that instills a civic duty to vote and a unionizing effect. It is also noted that schools with large residential populations have higher turnouts among students than commuter schools (Shearer, 2023; Ahearn, Brand, Zhou, 2023). In which OU has 32% of students living on campus. That is more than 9,200 additional people who are able to register and possible vote in Norman elections (The U.S News, 2023).

THE MOVE-IN VOTE

The final bridging aspect in explaining the potential political impacts of the University of Oklahoma is the atmosphere it creates in the city of Norman that not only makes the area desirable for students but also other adults with advanced degrees. Norman has grown from a city of 110,925 to an estimated 130,046 in 2024, a 17.24% growth rate increase in fourteen years (U.S. Census Bureau). The University is bringing hundreds of millions of dollars to the area that wouldn't otherwise be there, creating a city with a high quality of living and many opportunities. The research-minded community presents an academia-fueled town that is eye-catching to highly educated individuals and their families. In fact, on average, according to the Census Bureau, 46.2% of people living in Norman have a bachelor's degree or higher, a stark 18.4% increase from the state average. This, along with Norman's newfound identity as a "less conservative city" is drawing in other democratic voters and move-ins from more rural and conservative areas who wish to join a community that more closely aligns with their political beliefs (Mahtesian & Alexander, 2023; Smith, 2023; Mariani and Hewitt, 2008).

All these factors combined seem to lead to a conclusion of possible reasons why Norman could possibly be one of the most Democratic cities in The State of Oklahoma, yet further examination is needed to reveal just how Democratic the city actually may vote

and what liberal ideas the city may or may not support. This examination intends to fill in that blank and perform a deep dive on Norman's elections on a citywide basis instead of the county-wide election data available.

III. METHODS

For this project I analyzed data from General Elections from the years 2010-2024. I chose this time frame to begin my research due to 2010 being the year that all statewide offices were won by the Republican candidate, and thus the start of true Republican partisan dominance in Oklahoma (Hardt, 2023). This date became in ideal starting to begin to analyze if a political shift had occurred in Norman as well.

To begin, I gathered election data from the Cleveland County Election Board as well as the Oklahoma State Election Board and began to isolate precincts located within Norman city limits. To do this I compiled a list of all precincts that were eligible to vote in Norman city elections noting which precincts were located closest in proximity to The University of Oklahoma. From there I created a spreadsheet to calculate the total number of votes for each candidate from each precinct and added all the precinct data to create a sum that would represent the total number of votes cast in Norman as well as percentages for each candidate. It is noted that for the 2010 General Election I did not include the Cleveland County absentee votes because they were counted separately, and it is impossible to isolate Norman voters. I then compared the date to that of the same races on the countywide or district wide and statewide level to reveal the difference in level of support for each political party.

The offices that I chose to analyze are as follows: President and Vice President, Governor, United States Senator, United States Representative (District 4), State Senator (Districts 15, 16, 24) and State Representative (Districts 20, 44, 45, 46) as well as straight

party voting. I felt that these offices provided a good variety of races and candidates to be able to have a good understanding of voting trends. As well as that these elections can be compared on multiple levels. For the State Senator and Representative races, I compared the data to the statewide average vote for all contested State Senate and State Representative races respectively that occurred in the same election. My final step in data collection was to create a timeline and order all my collected data chronologically comparing all elections for the same office against their Norman, statewide and Cleveland County totals while also comparing results from previous elections.

Lastly, I gathered the yearly enrollment numbers, Faculty numbers, the number of students from out of state each semester of the University of Oklahoma and created a similar timeline to compare against by completed election results. All reports used for data on OU were provided on The University of Oklahoma's official website.

IV. ANALYSIS

Of the fifty-four total contested elections analyzed, the data points in the hypothesized direction with Norman having higher Democratic voting percentages than the state and Cleveland County totals in 46 of 54 elections, 85.18% of elections. See Charts below for specific election data. Of the eight elections that had lower than state average voting percentages six of the elections were located in districts that contained six or less precincts located in Norman, with the included precincts located on the outskirts of city limits (State Districts 27, 20 and State Senate District 24). In elections that were uncontested a Democrat held the office 9 out of 20 times (45%). In total from the years 2010 through 2024 Norman has voted for the Democratic candidate 46.47% in elections, a 10.48% increase from Oklahoma's statewide average of 36.99% during the same period.

For the same time, I found no statistically significant difference in voter turnout between precincts located in Norman and the Statewide average but there is a 1.49 - 3.0% increase in turnout in Non-Presidential General Elections since 2012.

The data collected from The University of Oklahoma revealed that there was a 16.5% growth rate in enrollment from 26,490 in 2010 to 30,873 in 2024. and an even larger 56.7% growth rate coming from states outside of Oklahoma growing from 33.38 to 44.75% in the same period. Proving that while they may not be physically voting in Norman elections their effects may still be felt on the political climate of the city.

Figure 1

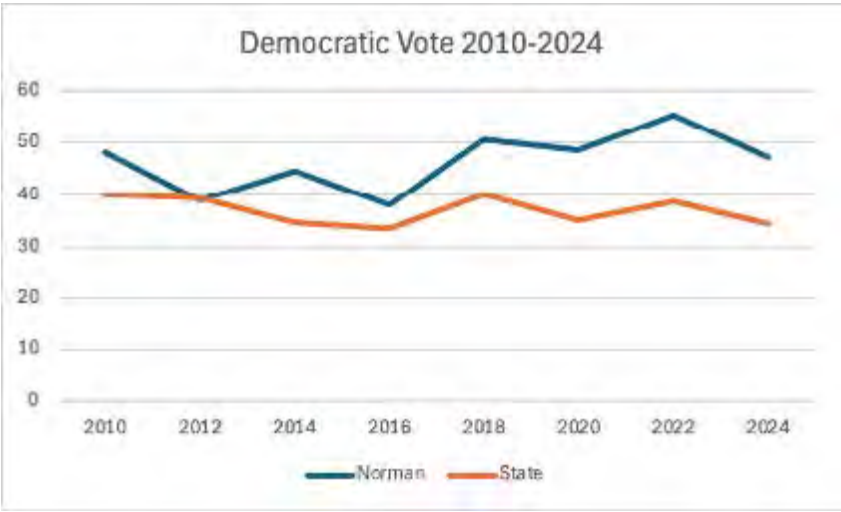


Figure 2

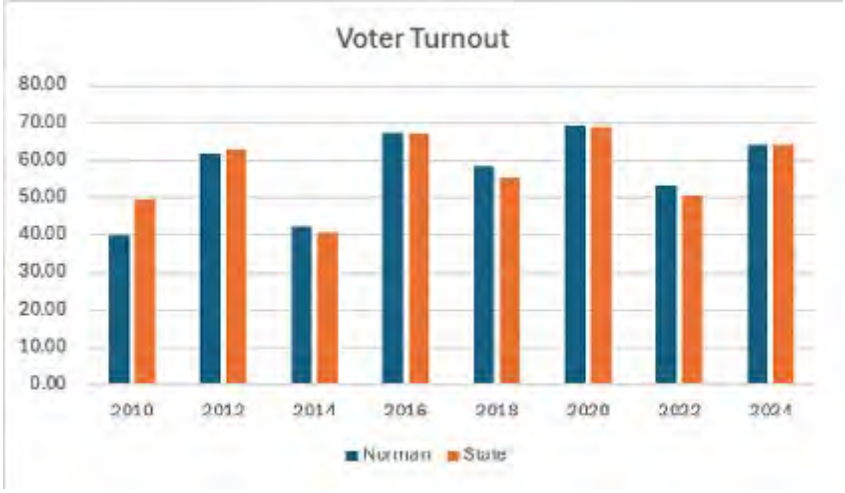
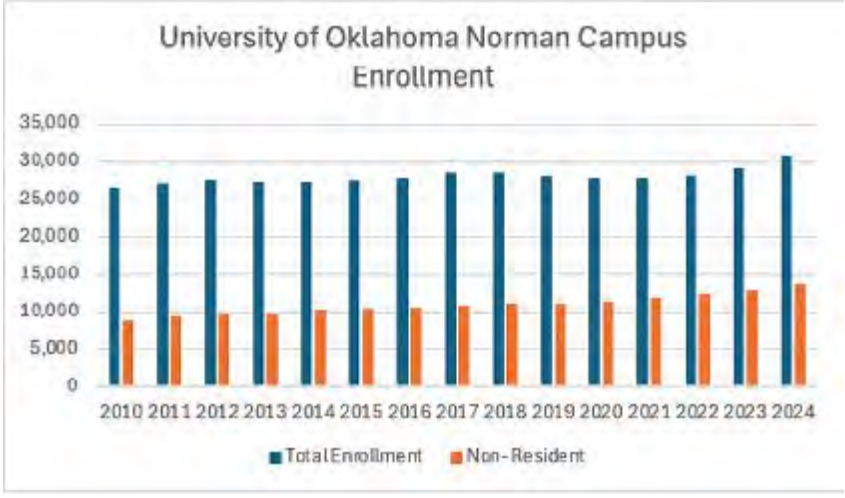


Figure 3



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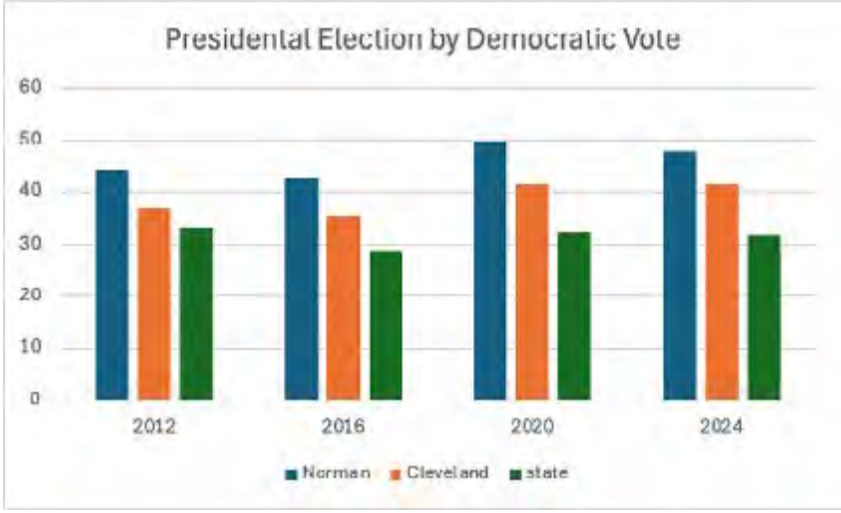

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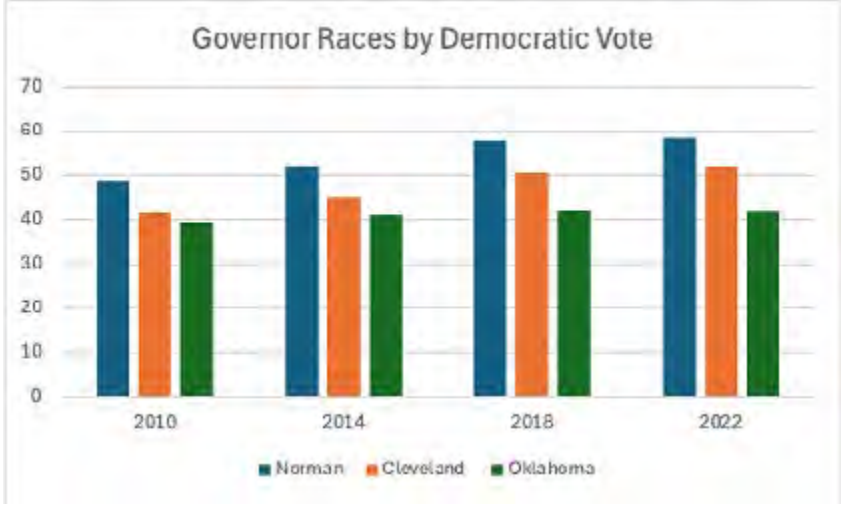

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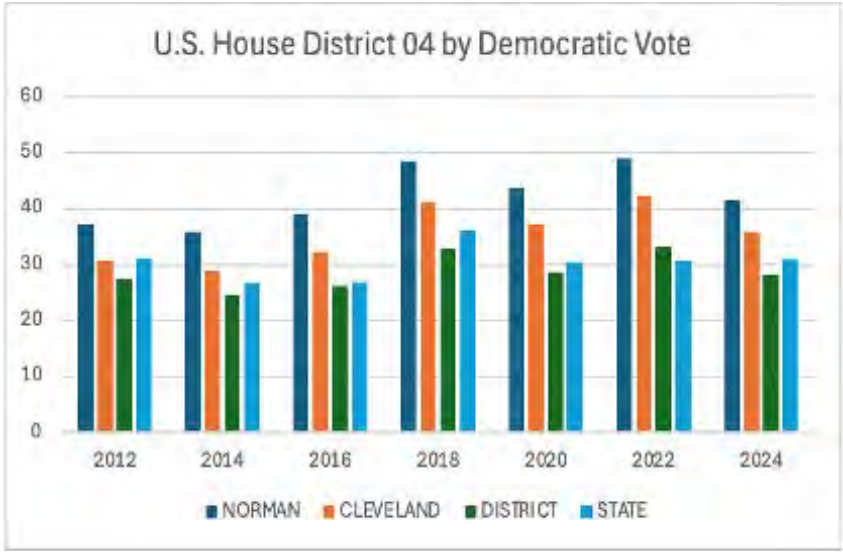

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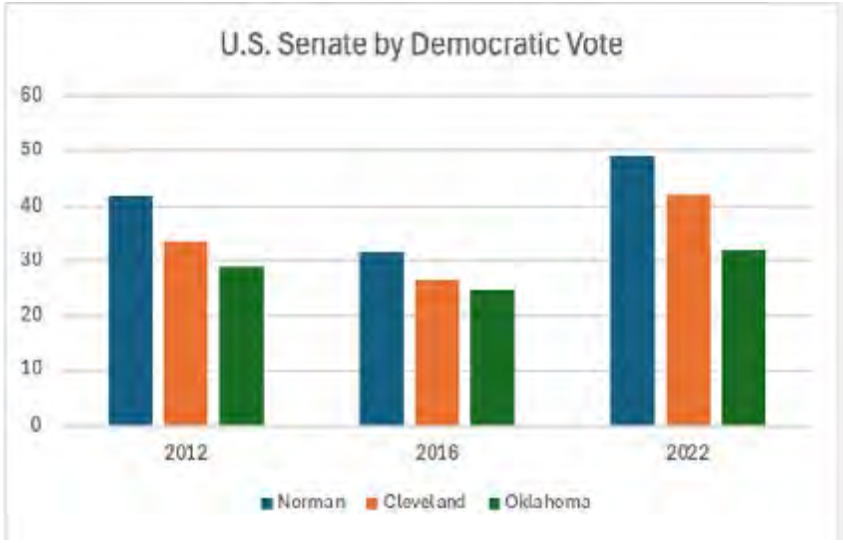

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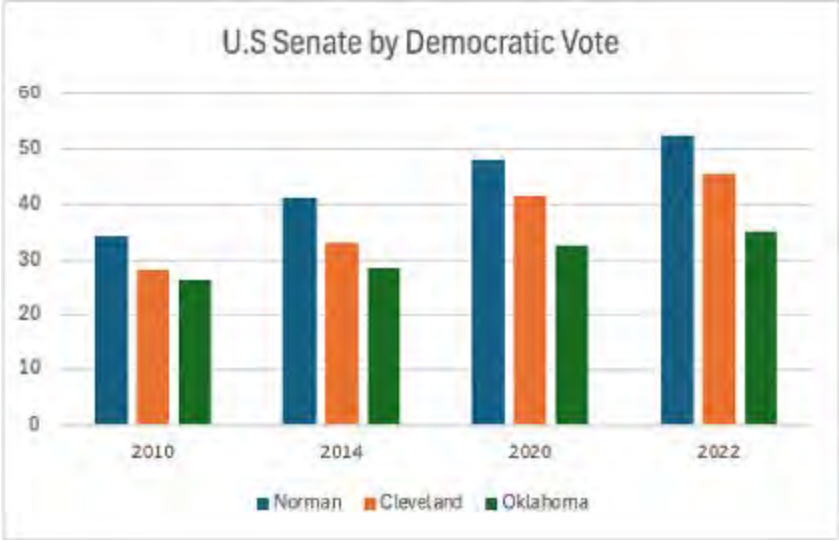

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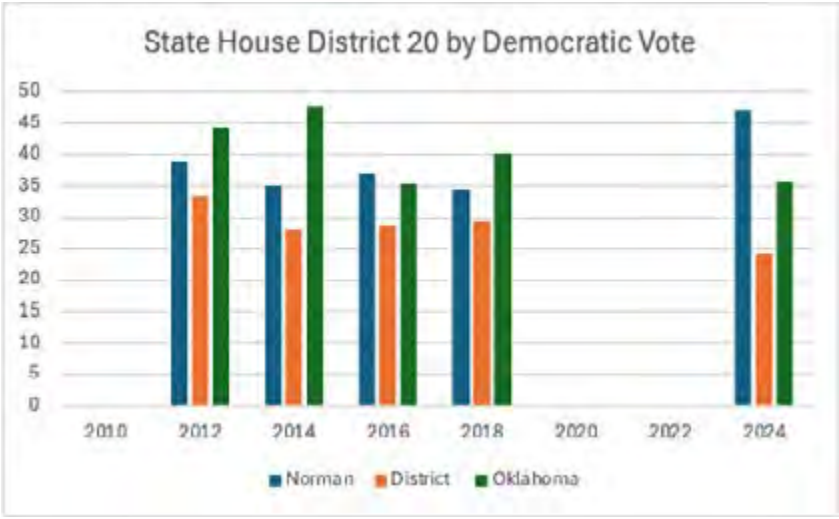
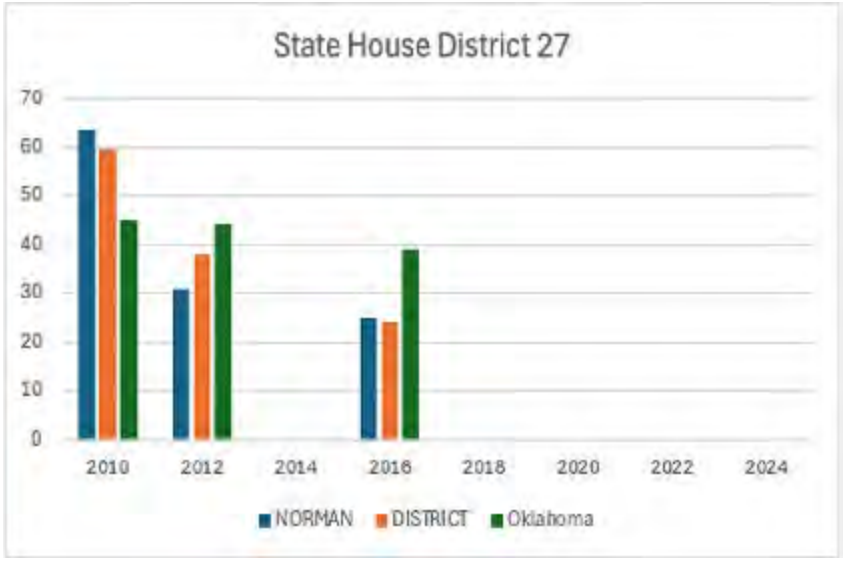


Figure 10



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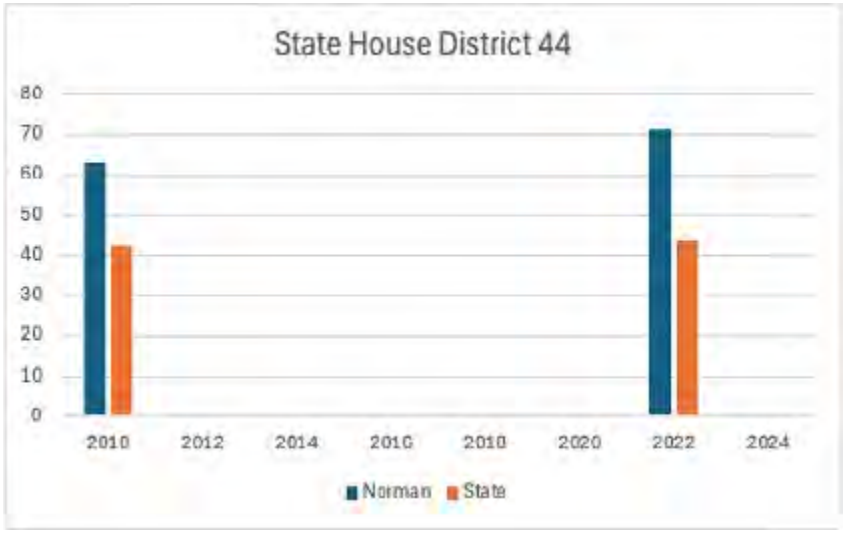


Figure 12

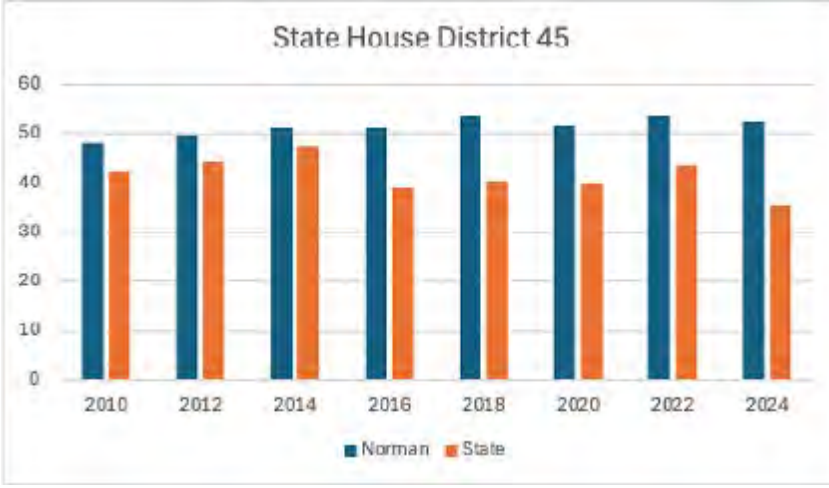
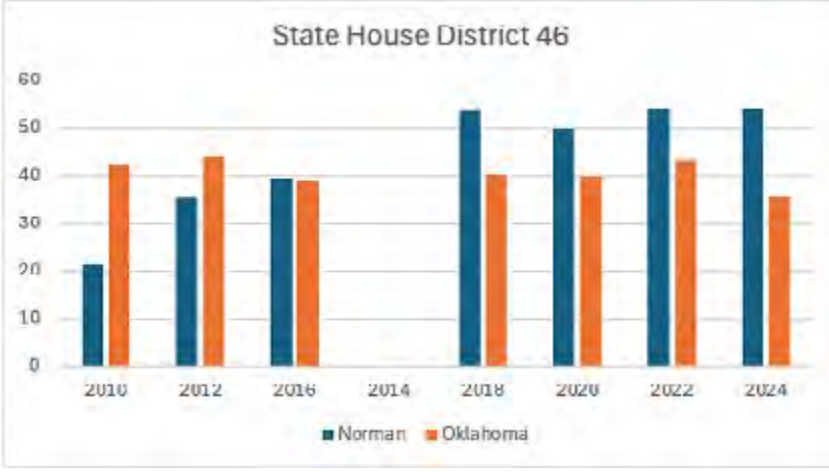


Figure 13



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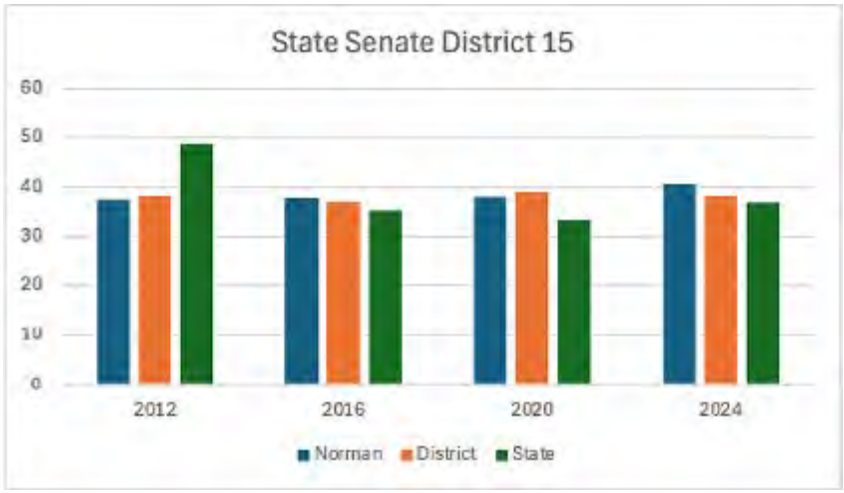

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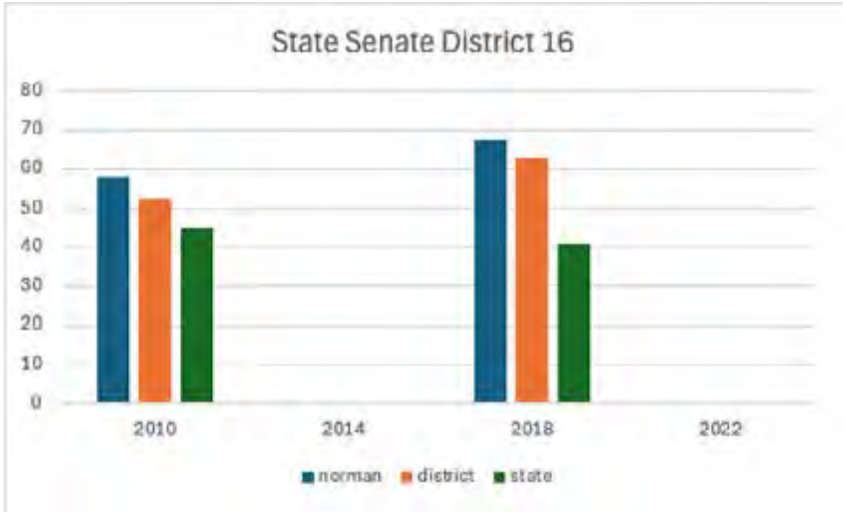
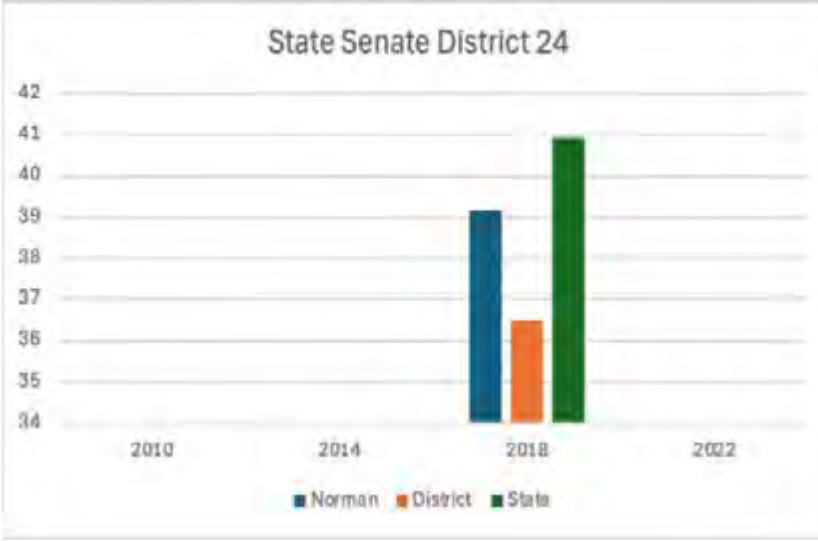


Figure 16



V. CONCLUSION

After analyzing the factors that were examined throughout this paper, the leading theory that communities with above average highly educated populations tend to vote more Democratic holds true for Norman, Oklahoma (Pew Research Center 2023, Goldberg, 2023). While when compared Nationally, a 46.47% vote does not appear to be very liberal at all, but when compared to the state that Norman lies within only gathers less than 36% it suddenly seems impressive to have that much a difference in preference. Even compared to Cleveland County and the cities that lie directly beside Norman such as Moore, the Democratic candidates perform better inside Norman's city limits in nearly every race. While the demographics are roughly the same compared to statewide data in every other area, the one statistical category that Norman has the leg up on is education level and the presence of The University of Oklahoma.

An explanation that knits these two independent statistics together is the bridging social capital created by attending a college or university. Bridging social capital is defined by The Institute for Social Capital as "Connections that link people across a cleavage that typically divides society (such as race, or class, or religion). It is associations that 'bridge' *between* communities, groups, or organizations." (Claridge 2018, np). It is widely known that attending college allows for unique opportunities for the students attending, for many students it is the first time they may meet and talk to people from different states that are starkly different from themselves. This along with the education they are receiving that involves learning things such as critical thinking, communication skills, and civic consciousness through required courses.

I believe that it is this social capital that accounts for Norman's divergence from the rest of the state. This can be backed by the increasing number of non-resident students at OU. The non-resident population grew by 56.7% since 2010 that directly offsets Oklahoma's Republican shift, possibly leading to Norman's political stability. While most of these students are most likely not voting directly in Norman's elections, their influence is still widely felt within the university and community. Each student, or even Professor is bringing their own unique life story and political beliefs creating bridging social capital with other students or members of the Norman community, that local Oklahomans would not otherwise have thereby helped to resist going with the statewide partisan trends due to interacting with multiple perspectives.

In closing, Norman's political identity showcases how a city's scholarly environment can shape not just traditional higher education learnings but also other political ideological leanings. The presence of the University of Oklahoma and above average education levels in Norman and the bridging social capital that comes along with them appear to be major factors in explaining why Nor-

man stands apart from the rest of the state politically. As Oklahoma continues to shift further to the right, Norman has remained relatively stable in its Democratic support, possibly largely due to the influence of the university community. Looking ahead, the continued growth of non-resident student populations, the expanding reach of higher education and Norman's population continued growth may further solidify this divide. If similar patterns are observed in other major college towns across the state, it may indicate a larger trend in which universities act as stabilizing forces for political diversity and civic engagement. Understanding this relationship further could be useful for candidates playing to run for office and could be key to predicting future political outcomes in Oklahoma.

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WHY CAN'T THE BAPTIST AND THE NONDENOMINATIONAL BE FRIENDS: THE EFFECT OF RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS IN OKLAHOMA

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ABSTRACT

The study of the effect of religious belonging is a long history of evolution on how to best account for the diversity that exists within religious groups while also categorizing people into large enough groups for analysis. Importantly these schemes have almost entirely focused on religious belonging in a national context. This study begins the development of a scheme that categorizes religious organizations and identities based on who religious groups identify as allies within their own unique religious marketplace. Oklahoma is an interesting test case because its religious and political makeup are unique compared to nation. This creates and breaks alliances in interesting ways. After developing this scheme, the article uses data from the Cooperative Election Survey to compare between religious movements on political identity, support for prominent politicians, electoral activity, and support for immigration policy proposals. The article finds support for the validity of using religious movements as the basis for classification both in Oklahoma and in other states.

RELIGIOUS BELONGING

Any study of the effects of religion on politics must first decide exactly how the researcher classifies religion. While there are a lot of different aspects of religion in a person's daily life most studies focus on one of three different aspects that have been found to produce statistically significant effects (cite Guth et al); belief, behavior, and belonging. This study uses the last aspect, belonging.

The earliest forms of religious belonging classification did this very simply. Hedberg (1955) used three, Protestant, Catholic, Jew. As the study of religion grew social scientists saw the need for a classification scheme that was more comprehensive of the religious diversity that exists within some of these categories. Protestantism is a diverse category made up of religious families (like Baptists) and denominations (specific types of Baptists; American, Southern, and National Baptists to name a few). The problem with using denominations is that America's religious landscape is too diverse. There are literally hundreds of different groups in the United States. The PEW Religious Landscape Survey's (2015) questioning methodology is the basis for other surveys. It recognizes 75 unique kinds of Baptists. That does not include Methodists, Lutherans, Presbyterians, etc. Studying the effect of religious belonging requires accounting for diversity while also having large enough categories to effectively analyze.

While there are classification schemes that minimize the denominational differences within families (Sherkat 2014) these schemes are more applicable in sociology than in political science. There is a long body of research that finds that intra-familial splits are almost always over politics (Wurthnow 1988). Niebhur wrote that the reasons that Christians split from one another is almost never about theology but politics (1929). The Southern Baptist Convention split with the other Baptists over slavery (Goen 1988), the Presbyterian Church in American split over integration (Dupont

2015), African Methodist Episcopalians were created because northern white Methodists did not want to worship with free African Americans (Morris 1984). The list goes on and on. Notice that none of these divisions happened because of theology. The divisions OFNurred because of a political issue. Denominations help us identify political divisions within theological families.

T.W. Smith's FUND measure (1990) classified denominations into groups based on how the denomination's support for fundamentalism. FUND fell out of favor for a few reasons. One problem was that it assumed that respondents would reflect the beliefs of their denomination. Future research revealed that this was frequently not the case. People end up in religious denominations for all sorts of reasons and their personal religious beliefs are not always a reflection of the teachings of their denomination. The second reason that it fell out of favor is that as Steensland et al (2000) noted; fundamentalism had become a political and a religious identity. People who did have fundamentalist beliefs would not identify as such because that term did not reflect their personal politics.

Today the dominant form of classification of religious belonging in the United States is RELTRAD. (Steensland et al 2000) RELTRAD stands for religious tradition. It uses the historical development of denominations in the United States as the basis for classification. RELTRAD breaks Christianity into six groups: Mainline Protestants, Evangelicals, Historically Black Protestants, Catholics, Orthodox, Mormons, and Jehovah's Witnesses. Mainline Protestants reflect the dominant traditional forms of Christianity that developed after the Protestant Reformation. Evangelicals reflect the denominational splits that mostly began in the early to mid-20th century. Historically Black Protestantism were the denominations that were created because of segregation policies in America which led to an entirely different historical trajectory for these denominations even though they are in the same religious family.

RELTRAD is the dominant form of belonging classification, it is not without its critics. There is growing evidence that evangelical has become a political identity in the same way that fundamentalism had become a political identity in the 1980s and 1990s. We can see this in surveys that ask for both religious denomination and various religious identities. We can easily find "evangelical" Catholics, Mormons, and Episcopalians despite those religious groups not being part of the Evangelical tradition. Another criticism is that religious tradition was designed to explain the denominational breaks of the 20th Century and so it is poor at explaining denominational breaks of today. Denominations may feel stable, but they are influx. The more modern splits over LGBT acceptance that have hit the ELCA, United Methodist Church, and the Episcopal Church are examples of this problem. Your denomination is not part of an Evangelical tradition if you were a Mainliner until 2021. Another problem is that religious tradition does not reflect how denominations order themselves. It particularly oversimplifies the diversity that exists in Evangelical Protestantism (Grant and Searcy 2019) and it completely misses the organizational ties that have developed between historically black Protestant denominations and their white counterparts.

The problem is systemic. RELTRAD is a good scheme at doing exactly what Steensland et al (2000) designed it to do. It reflects the denominational schisms that emerged in the mid-20th Century at the national level. It does that job very well. It does not necessarily reflect how religious groups organize themselves. It is also designed to reflect religion on a national level in the United States. For researchers who are interested in religion on the local, state, or even international level it may be insufficient.

RELIGIOUS BELONGING ON THE STATE LEVEL

While there has been a great deal of research onto the religious make-up of the United States there has not been much that has focused on religious belonging on the state level. When religion is used as a variable in state level analyses researchers will typ-

ically use RELTRAD. This is despite each state having its own unique economy, racial make-up, immigrant population, and political culture to name a few differences (Gray et al 2018). States have unique religious make-up. The size and power of a religious denomination affect the likelihood that they will form alliances with other groups in the same way that it affects the likelihood that an alliance will form between two social movements (Van Dyke and McCammon 2010). This is vitally important for religion on the state level because it is likely that each religious group is going to vary significantly in their power and influence depending on the state you want to analyze. Catholicism makes up a quarter of the United States' religious market on the national level but there are going to be variations of that on the state level. In some states they might make up more than 25%, in others they will make up less. In some states Catholicism will be dominated by different racial and ethnic backgrounds. If we want to analyze the effect of religious belonging on the state level then it is worth analyzing what religious belonging on the state level actually looks like.

The easiest, and most reflective method for this analysis, is to look at how religious groups organize themselves on a state-by-state basis. The challenging part of this is that while ecumenical relationships are common on the national level they are less common on the state level. At the National level there are groups like the National Council of Churches (NCC), the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), and the Council of National Black Churches (CNBC) among others. Of those three only one, the NCC, has state level affiliate organizations. While that limits the basis upon which we can make classifications it does not mean that the task is impossible.

The NCC affiliate organizations are a wonderful resource because despite being reflective of the national NCC they do not have identical membership. An example is the Arizona Faith Network. The Arizona Faith Network has denominational and "at large" partners. The Denominational Partners groups include the traditional

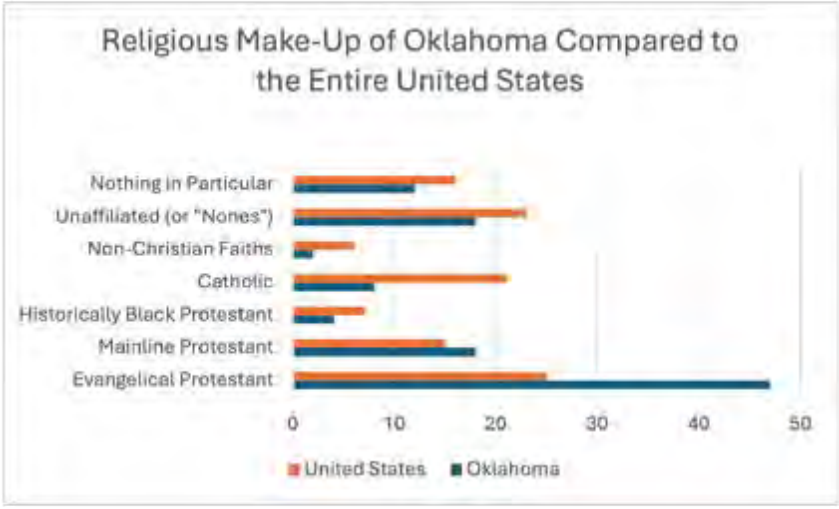
Mainline Protestant churches (Disciples of Christ, Episcopalians, ELCA Lutherans, PCUSA, etc.…) but it also includes the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) and the Roman Catholic Diocese of Phoenix (Catholic). I am not arguing that there are no historical or theological differences between these different religious groups. Clearly the Catholic church and LDS Mormons are not the same. What this reflects is that these differences are not so great that these different organizations, given the issues that they are all facing in Arizona, are unwilling to work together as partners.

Another thing that is apparent when examining state and local religious organizations is that they are more likely to be interfaith as opposed to ecumenical. An ecumenical organization is one that is building closer relationships among Christian denominations. Interfaith organizations are groups that involve people of differing religious faiths. There are obvious differences in belief and practices across different religious faiths but in this case that does not matter. Political Scientists are interested primarily in the political policy goals of religious people. Interfaith organizations lobby for the shared goals of their members. By joining the interfaith organization, the denominations are uniting their political goals to the political goals of non-Christian religious faiths.

OKLAHOMA

Oklahoma is a good state to analyze because of the interesting differences within the state's religious landscape when compared to the religious landscape of the United States. Figure One presents the religious landscape of Oklahoma from the 2014 PEW Religious Landscape Survey.

Figure One: Comparison of Oklahoma's Religious Landscape to the United States as a Whole



Oklahoma is a heavily Evangelical state. Almost half of the PEW Respondents were Evangelical which is far above the national average. Evangelicals make up almost 60% of self-identified Oklahoman Christians. The only other group who outpaces their national average in Oklahoma is another group of white Protestants; the Mainline. The Mainline percentage of Oklahoma is slightly ahead of their national average.

There is a population drop-off among all other historical traditions including Catholics, Historically Black Protestants, Non-Christian religious faiths, the "nones", and people who identify as nothing. Some of these findings are due to state demographics. Historically Black Protestantism's smaller percentage is compared to the nation partially because Oklahoma has a lower-than-national average number of African American residents. While Oklahoma is more racially diverse than many of its neighbors that is largely due to the state's comparatively high Indigenous population.

As we break down religious alliances in the state of Oklahoma one thing to look for in the state is how the religious composition of

the state alters the behavior of the religious actors in the state. Do Catholics behave in a different was when they make up 8% of the population than when they make-up 21% of the population? Given the tiny number of non-Christian religious people in the state who do they turn to for political alliances? Oklahoma City and Tulsa are large metropolitan areas that do have a diverse religious landscape, and those religious minorities have political goals just like they do in the broader national context. How are they attempting to achieve those goals and who do they ally themselves with?

THE OKLAHOMA FAITH NETWORK AND ROMAN CATHOLICS

The largest Oklahoma based affiliate of the National Council of Churches in Oklahoma is the "Oklahoma Faith Network." The OFN, an outgrowth of the Oklahoma Council of Churches, was founded in 1972 and has the stated goal of, "organizing disaster response solutions, cooperating with government agencies to educate people on specific needs, and hosting events designed to inform and promote understanding and unity." (History, 2025)

Chart One: The Communion Members of the Oklahoma Faith Network

Communions	RELTRAD Code
African Methodist Episcopal Church	Historically Black Protestant
African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church	Historically Black Protestant
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)	Mainline Protestant
Christian Methodist Episcopal Church	Historically Black Protestant
Cooperating Baptist Fellowship	Mainline Protestant
Episcopal Church	Mainline Protestant
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America	Mainline Protestant
Evangelical Episcopal Church	Evangelical Protestant
Mennonite Church	Mainline Protestant
Presbyterian Church, USA	Mainline Protestant
Progressive Oklahoma Baptist State Convention	Historically Black Protestant
Reformed Church in America	Mainline Protestant
Religious Society of Friends	Mainline Protestant
United Church of Christ	Mainline Protestant
United Methodist Church	Mainline Protestant

The Oklahoma Faith Network (OFN) is primarily made up of a combination of Mainline Protestant denominations in their communion group. You can see that most of the traditionally large Mainline denominations are almost all present in that list. The ma-

jor exception is that the American Baptists are completely absent. The only predominately white Baptist denomination in the OFN is the much smaller Cooperating Baptist Fellowship.

The other interesting thing to note in Chart One is that the historically black Protestant denominations have joined the OFN. The historically black denominations in Oklahoma that have joined the OFN are almost all Methodist; AME, AME Zion, and CME are all historically black Methodist denominations. The only non-Methodist historically black denomination is that affiliated with the Progressive Baptist Church. This is a much smaller denomination than the largest black Baptist denomination in the United States, the National Baptist Convention.

Chart Two: The Congregational Members of the Oklahoma Faith Network

Congregation	Denominational Affiliation	RELTRAD Code
Crown Heights Christian Church	Disciples of Christ	Mainline
Edmond Trinity Christian Church	Disciples of Christ	Mainline
First Christian Church, Edmond	Disciples of Christ	Mainline
First Christian Church, Norman	Disciples of Christ	Mainline
Joy Mennonite Church	Mennonite Church USA	
Mayflower Congregation Church – UCC	United Church of Christ (UCC)	Mainline
Northhaven Church	Alliance of Baptists	Mainline
Oklahoma City First Church of the Nazarene	Church of the Nazarene	Evangelical
Parish of St. Bernard of Clairvaux	Catholic	Catholic
St. Augustine of Canterbury Episcopal Church	Episcopal Church	Mainline
St. Paul's Cathedral	Episcopal Church	Mainline
Southern Hills Christian Church	Disciples of Christ	Mainline
Coffee Creek Church	Nondenominational	Varies*

The congregational OFN membership tells a slightly different story than the denominational data. We do see a lot of the same denominations replicated here. This could indicate that the congregation is especially committed to ecumenical and interfaith co-

operation.

More interesting are the congregations who are outliers. They belong to denominations that are not OFN members. Those churches are the Northhaven Church, the Oklahoma City First Church of the Nazarene, the Parish of St. Bernard of Clairvaux, and Coffee Creek Church. The Northhaven Church is affiliated with the Baptist identity, but it is the only Baptist church in the entire state to affiliate with the OFN. This is also true of Coffee Creek Church. Baptist and Nondenominational churches have significant variation on whether they work with other churches. Some are more ecumenical, but many are insular. In both cases the congregations cannot be seen to represent the views of the religious identity but instead represent an outlier; an ecumenical congregation in an otherwise nonecumenical religious identity.

The St. Bernard of Clairvaux Parish is interesting. It is the only Catholic parish who has joined the OFN. The St. Bernard parish is in the Diocese of Tulsa and Eastern Oklahoma. The Diocese has dozens of members, but the St. Bernard parish is the only one to formally join the OFN. While the membership of St. Bernard should be noted it appears to be an outlier congregation. There are dozens of Catholic parishes across the state of Oklahoma and despite that none have joined the OFN. None of the Diocese in Oklahoma have joined. They are therefore not a representative of Catholics in the state. The scheme says this because the group is unwilling to join the OFN.

This is true of our other outlier, the Oklahoma City First Church of the Nazarene (OKCFCotN). The Church of the Nazarene is an Evangelical denomination. This is misleading. The OFN lists the denomination on its previous name. The church is currently known as OKC First. It changed its name after leaving the Nazarene denomination in 2025 due to its political stance in opposition to LGBTQIA+ people. (Hinton 2025)

Chart Three: Interfaith Members of the Oklahoma Faith Network

CAIR Oklahoma
First Unitarian Church of OKC
Islamic Society of Greater Oklahoma City
Tulsa Metropolitan Ministry

Chart Three includes a small selection of the community partners of the OFN. Community members include non-Christian organizations. These make the OFN interfaith as opposed to just ecumenical like the NCC. The most interesting takeaway is that Islamic organizations play an important role in the OFN. There are two Islamic affiliated with the OFN. CAIR is a state-level chapter of the national CAIR organization. CAIR stands for the Council on American-Islamic Relations. CAIR is an organization who defines its mission as, "to enhance the understanding of Islam, encourage dialogue, protect civil liberties, empower American Muslims, and build coalitions that promote justice and mutual understanding." (Vision, Mission, and Core Principles 2025) In addition to CAIR-OK we also see the Islamic Society of Greater Oklahoma City. The ISGOC is the largest Islamic Center in the state.

The Tulsa Metropolitan Ministry is an interfaith organization which is trying to develop relationships and communities among religious organizations in the Tulsa area. We once again see some of the same groups we have seen up to this point. There are many Mainline and Historically Black Protestant congregations. We also, once again, see Unitarian/Universalists and Islamic society groups in Tulsa. The TMM also has multiple Jewish temples and organizations. These include B'Nai Emunah, Jewish Federation of Tulsa, and Temple Israel.

What an analysis of the OFN demonstrates is that given the reli-

gious and political make-up of the state that most Mainline and non-Christian denominations view each other as political allies. Regardless of the important theological differences between members they are willing to work together in the state.

The OFN represents an interfaith religious movement within the state. It is a formal tie between multiple Mainline denominations and non-Christians including Jews, Muslims, and Unitarians.

While there are linkages between the OFN and the Roman Catholic Church the ties are too weak to link them together. The Catholic Church has large Diocese operating within the state and none of them are willing to join in OFN. There are isolated congregations that will join either the OFN directly or indirectly though the Tulsa Metropolitan Ministries. Those congregations may represent the building of a coalition between the OFN and the Catholics but that coalition has not come together by the time of this article.

RELIGIOUS IDENTITIES

The OFN is an alliance of Mainline Protestants, Historically Black Protestants, and non-Christians in the state. The remainder of the religious marketplace can be split into four religious movements; all of which use a collective religious identity to put them together.

Baptists

Figure One presented Oklahoma as a predominately Evangelical state. Evangelicalism tells only part of the story. Baptists dominate the religious landscape in Oklahoma. According to Pew (2015) Baptists make up roughly half of Oklahoma's Evangelicals, half of Oklahoma's Historically Black Protestants, and a third of its Mainline Protestants.

In the absence of contradictory information Baptists should be classified together because they hold similar theologies and have a share religious identity (Ammerman 1990, Brackney 2004). Bap-

tists are also unique because their congregational power structure allows local churches to associate with more than one denomination at a time. In Oklahoma it is entirely possible for a congregation to associate with both the American Baptist Church USA and the National Baptist Convention.

On the national level we have reason to separate Baptists into different traditions. The Southern Baptists exist independently from the others. In Oklahoma those differences are not there. Despite being a member of the NCC the American Baptist Church USA in Oklahoma is not a member of the OFN. The exact same thing is true of the National Baptist Convention. The only Baptist church that affiliates with the OFN is the much smaller Progressive Baptist church which is categorized alongside the OFN.

As far back as Olson (1965) social scientists have known that affiliation is based as much on power as it is in compatible goals. In the case of Baptists there numbers in Oklahoma are so great that they have no need or desire to affiliate with any other religious movement. They function as a movement unto themselves.

Nondenominational

The other explicitly religious identity that is large enough in Oklahoma to qualify as its own religious movement are Nondenominationals. Nondenom are members of local congregations that are not connected to any denominational structure (Ammerman 2005).

The thing that binds Nondenominationals together is the collective identity of nondenominational. It is a term they use that differentiates them from Baptists. Burge (2018) has argued that Nondenominationals and Baptists are similar. While the data does back up Burge's argument the similarities this paper is using who the groups associate themselves with. Nondenominational churches could very easily be Baptists. As Burge (2018) points out the church governance and beliefs are incredibly similar. In Oklaho-

ma being a Baptist aligns you with a religious identity that is a plurality of the population. Despite the similarities that exist theologically Nondenominationals are not doing that.

Atheists/Agnostics and Religious Nones

The final religious identities that are prominent enough in Oklahoma large enough to warrant their own religious category are the non-religious. The non-religious are largely made up of three groups: Atheists, Agnostics, and the Religious Nones. Some might be tempted to put all three of these groups into a single group but that overlooks the literature on the non-religious. As Campbell et al. (2018) put it,

> "*Just as religion is multidimensional* (Kellstedt et al. 1996) *so is secularism. Many secularists do not simply reject religion; they actively promote secular beliefs, such as the efficacy of reason and science, and human experience as a proper basis for ethical judgments. Moreover, to be actively secular does not preclude also being religious in some way. That is, someone can embrace a secular perspective while maintaining a religious identity and participating in religious activities. This is not a possibility when secularity is defined only as nonreligion, making it impossible to distinguish passive secularism, or the absence of religiosity, from active secularism, or the affirmation of secular identity and beliefs."* (Campbell et al. 2018, pg. 553)

Researchers have increasingly focused on the religious "nones" as they have grown (Baker and Smith 2009). People who identify as a religious none, or nothing in particular, do not identity with a specific religion. That does not mean that they lack religious beliefs (Drescher 2016). Most importantly, they are not willing to accept the identity of either Atheist or Agnostic. Religious Nones is a unique religious identity that separates itself not only from explicit religious identities like Christian, but it also separates itself

from explicitly non-religious identities like Atheist.

WHO IS LEFT?

At this point using religious movements has identified two formally organized groups; The Oklahoma Faith Network and Catholics. Each represents a large and formally organized religious movement. While there is some evidence of coalition building between the two groups this is very much at the embryonic stage of development. After the formal organizing I identified four prominent religious identities in Oklahoma: Baptist, Nondenominational, Atheist/Agnostic, and Religious Nones. None of these are formally organized but each represents a collective identity that each uses to distinguish itself from the others in the Oklahoman religious marketplace.

This leaves us with one final religious movement to discuss. In many discussions of religious belonging categorization this is where we would focus on non-Christian religions. In Oklahoma that is not the case. As demonstrated earlier, non-Christian faiths like Islam, Judaism, Unitarianism associate themselves with the OFN and are classified there. In the case of religious movements in Oklahoma the movement that is left are Christians who are in churches that do not fall into one of our previous categories.

Every categorization scheme is going to have a group that is the "Other" category. In the case of religious movements there is at least something binding these disparate Christian denominations together; they do have a collective identity. They all identify themselves as Christian. While there are differences of theology and practice between Pentecostals, Presbyterians, Mormons, etc… they all have the common identity of Christian. This movement is therefore expressed in a collective religious identity that has internal religious diversity.

METHODOLOGY

This paper uses data from the 2022 Cooperative Election Study (Schaffner et al 2003). The Cooperative Election Study is a nationally representative sample of 60,000 American adults. To make it useful for this survey I used only the data from people who identified that they lived in Oklahoma. That left 686 respondents. This was more than sufficient to analyze quantitatively.

The first step, as described in detail above, was to implement the Religious Movement categorization scheme above. The Oklahoma Faith Network, Baptists, Nondenominationals, Other Christians, Catholics, Atheists/Agnostics, and Religious Nones were created. The only remaining people left to categorize were respondents who reported that they were "Something Else." Based on the question wording and the existing literature (Burge 2017) the assumption I went with was that most of the "Something Else" category represents predominately Christians who do not know what the word Protestant means. Luckily the "best practices" of existing schemes uses a religious identity to classify Christians who we cannot clearly identify, a "born-again" religious identity. (Steensland et al 2000, Smidt 2013, Woodberry et al 2012, Wuthnow 1988) Respondents who identified as "Something Else" but also claimed a "born-again" religious identity were classified with the Other Christians group. Respondents who identified as "Something Else" but did not claim a "born-again" religious identity were classified with the Oklahoma Faith Network.

I was interested in the effect on religious movements in a couple of different areas. The first was in partisan identification. In the interest of simplicity, I used a three-point scale of Democrat, Republican, and Independent. Religious movements were first examined to see if there were partisan differences between the religious movements. After that analysis partisanship was used as a control variable.

For religious movement support of political candidates, I selected the two most high-profile examples in the dataset for Oklahomans. The first was vote in the 2020 election. For that I focused on vote for Biden, vote for Trump, and non-voting. The data indicated an extremely low vote total for third party candidates. This is not surprising. Oklahoma features several laws that make third party support and ballot access very restrictive compared to other states (FairVote 2015). I also used Job Approval data for Oklahoma Governor Kevin Stitt. 2022 was a Governorship election year in Oklahoma and Governor Stitt was running for re-election. This makes him an ideal figure to use in this study.

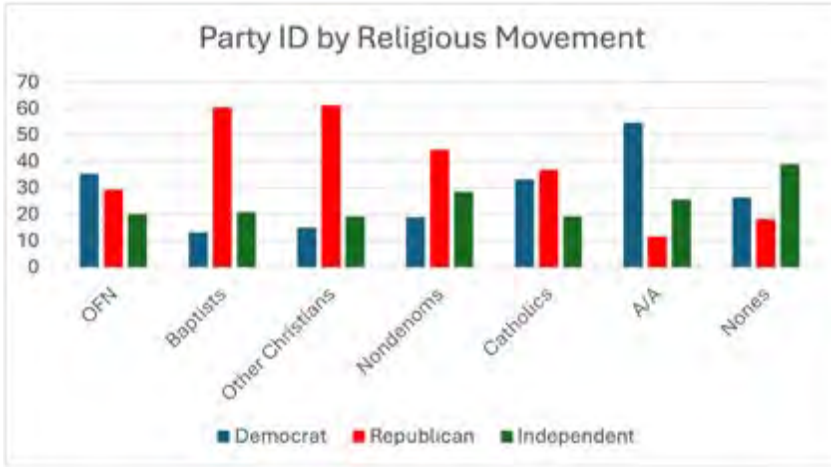
Beyond candidate support I selected on policy area, immigration, as a topic to analyze. The CES has four separate questions about immigration which made it an ideal place to look for differences. Immigration is also a good topic for studying the effect of a religious movement. Restricted immigration policies are often supported by Republicans but there are religious teachings about treating your neighbor are found throughout religious texts (Brown and Brown 2017).

Finally, for control variables I selected four. Age, Educational Attainment, Race, and Gender. For Age I used Birth Year (from 1932 to 2002) as opposed to generational cohort. For Educational Attainment responses ranged from 1-6 and included No High School, High School Graduate, Some College, 2-Year Degree, 4-Year Degree, and a Post-Grad degree. Race included race and ethnicity so Hispanic was an option. Gender was scored on a four-point scale where 1=male, 2=female, and 3 and 4 represented nonbinary and gender conforming respondents.

RESULTS

Party Identification

Figure Two: Partisan Identification by Religious Movement



The first difference between the religious movements of the state of Oklahoma is on party identification. Oklahoma religious organizations fall into some broad categories. The movements that are overwhelmingly Republican (>50% identification) are Baptists and the Formal Conservative Christian groups. Each has >60% Republican party ID with Democratic party identification behind political independents. The Nondenominational movement does not have 50% Republican party identification but it, along with the Baptists and Other Christians, are significantly more likely to identify as Republican than the Religious Nones.

Oklahoma only has a single movement (Atheists/Agnostics) that is overwhelmingly Democratic. The Atheist/Agnostic group is significantly more likely to identify as a Democrat than the religious nones when our controls are used.

Table Four About Here

Finally, two groups are insignificantly different from the Nones: the OFN and Catholics. Despite the lack of significant differences on a party identification scale of Democrats to Republicans there is one interesting point in the data between the two groups. The OFN and Catholics, like the other religious movements, only has a between 20-25% political Independents. Only one religious movement, Nondenominationals, has more than 30% of its movement identified as political Independents (31%). By contrast almost 50% of Religious Nones identify as Independent. Every religious movement was significantly more likely to identify with a political party than the Religious Nones[1]. Like previous research (CITE), disconnect from religious organizations is correlated with disconnect from political parties as well.

Political Candidates

To look for religious movement differences in politics we will begin by focusing on two well-known Republican candidates in Oklahoma, President Trump and Governor Kevin Stitt. President Trump was initially elected President in 2016 and defeated by President Biden in 2020. Trump handily won Oklahoma in the 2020 elections. Trump won the majority vote in all 77 counties of Oklahoma. Kevin Stitt was elected Governor in 2018 and at the time of the 2022 CCES was running for re-election. He ultimately won but the race was significantly closer than Biden's challenge.

We see some differences between movements when respondents were asked for their job approval for Governor Stitt. There are only three groups with a net positive job approval of Governor Stitt: Baptists, Other Christians, and Catholics. There are three groups with net disapproval numbers for Governor Stitt: the OFN, Nondenominationals, Atheists/Agnostics, and the Religious Nones.

1 Nondenominationals, the least collectively organized religious movement, is the only movement to only be significant at the 0.1 level.

Chart Four: The Effect of Religious Identification in Oklahoma

VARIABLES	Party Id (3-Point Scale)	2020 President	2020 Vote w/Non-Voters	Stitt Approval
OFN	-0.164	-0.0373	0.0751	-0.176
Baptists	-0.178	0.0649	-0.126	-0.180
Other Christians	-0.230*	0.0963**	-0.223***	-0.432**
Nondenomina-tional	-0.0974	0.0709	-0.149	-0.670***
Catholics	-0.271*	0.0717	-0.102	-0.538***
Atheist/ Agnostics	-0.558***	0.00808	0.0107	0.403**
CONTROL VARIABLES				
Birth Year	0.0114***	0.000788	-0.000419	-0.00463
Education	-0.130***	-0.0262***	0.0501***	0.0896**
Race/Ethnicity	0.0312	-0.0103	0.0158	0.0558*
Gender	-0.0748	-0.0426	0.0868*	0.219**
Party ID		0.428***	-0.718***	-0.888***
Constant	-19.60***	-0.750	3.972	13.83**
Observations	686	452	581	611
R-squared	0.102	0.656	0.563	0.343
Standard errors in parentheses *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1				

Chart Five: Support for a Legal Pathway for Working Illegal Immigrants – Baptists as the Control Group

VARIABLES	Legal Pathway for Workers
Baptists	
OFN	-0.222***
Other Christian	-0.141**
Nondenominational	0.0178
Catholics	-0.124
Atheist/Agnositc	-0.175**
Religious Nones	-0.105*
Birth Year	-0.00275**
Education	-0.00972
Race/Ethnicity	-0.0184*
Gender	-0.0525
Party ID	0.144***
Constant	6.703***
Observations	610
R-squared	0.144
Standard errors in parentheses *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1	

Interestingly when testing statistical significance, the OFN and Baptists are statistically insignificant from the Religious Nones. Three groups; the Other Christians, Nondenominationals, and Catholics were significantly more likely to report approving of

Governor Stitt's job performance. Only one group, Atheists and Agnostics, were significantly more likely to report disapproving of Governor Stitt's job performance.

When looking at the 2020 vote for Trump there are more interesting differences between the religious movements in Oklahoma. If we use the OFN as our comparison group there are four religious movements; Baptists, Other Christians, and Catholics that were significantly more likely to vote for Trump over Biden in the 2020 Presidential election. No group, not even the Atheists/Agnostics reported significantly higher Biden voting once controls were inputted.

Once again there is an interesting detachment among Religious Nones in Oklahoma. With controls we see significantly higher non-voting among the Religious Nones than two groups: the Other Christians and Atheists/Agnostics.

Arguably the most interesting finding on the 2020 Presidential vote in Oklahoma came in the final test. Remember, Oklahoma is arguably the most conservative state in the country. Republicans have dominated Presidential election returns for decades and in 2022 there was only one Democrat who held a statewide office, Joy Hofmeister, and she was elected to her position as a Republican. For a final test the Presidential election was to pick one of more politically conservative religious movements as our comparison group. Baptists were set as our comparison group, and the Presidential vote choice was limited to a binary choice between Biden and Trump. The results are on Chart Five. Compared to Baptists there was one group that was significantly different. The OFN was significantly more likely to vote for Biden at the 0.1 level. If not voting was included as an option that same thing occurred; the OFN was significantly less likely to vote for Trump in 2020, this time at the 0.05 level. What this means is that when you expand the options of the OFN in include staying at home as opposed to voting for Trump the difference with the other groups increases.

Immigration

Rather than simply looking at partisanship it is also important to look at the attitudes on immigration policy. The CCES has four different immigration policies that it tests. The first question is whether immigrants who have held jobs in the United States for years should be granted legal status. When the Religious Nones are used as the comparison group we find statistically significant differences among three movements. The OFN and Catholics are significantly more supportive of granting legal status to these immigrants. Interestingly only one movement, Nondenominationals, are significantly less supportive than the religious nones. When looking Baptists as the comparison group the most interesting takeaway is that the Other Christians movement is significantly more in favor of providing legal status to working immigrants. This is another place where we find differences within the broader religious tradition of Evangelicals.

Chart Six: Effect of Religious Movements in Oklahoma on Immigration Policies

VARIABLES	Creating a Legal Pathway for Workers	Increasing Border Security	Reducing Legal Immigration	Increasing Spending (including Wall)
OFN	-0.117**	-0.0397	0.0764	0.0184
Baptists	0.105*	-0.0599	0.00354	-0.147**
Other Christians	-0.0356	-0.0856	0.0447	-0.157***
Nondenominational	0.123*	-0.122**	0.0556	-0.121*
Catholics	-0.0182	-0.00650	0.171**	-0.118*
Atheists/ Agnostics	-0.0694	0.119**	0.177***	0.0684
CONTROLS				
Birth Year	-0.00275**	0.00528***	0.00594***	0.00253**
Education	-0.00972	0.0188*	0.0313**	0.0331***
Race/ Ethnicity	-0.0184*	0.0164*	0.00914	0.0219**
Gender	-0.0525	0.0459	0.0264	0.0821**
Party ID	0.144***	-0.178***	-0.181***	-0.269***
Constant	6.597***	-8.920***	-10.05***	-3.195
Observations	610	611	610	610
R-squared	0.144	0.252	0.197	0.347
Standard errors in parentheses *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1				

The second immigration question asks respondents if they support increasing border patrols along the US-Mexico border. Compared to Religious Nones we find significant differences among two groups; Nondenominationals are once again significantly more conservative. They are the only group to be significantly more supportive of the proposal. One group, Atheists/Agnostics, are significantly less supportive of the proposal.

In the third immigration question respondents were asked whether they supported reducing legal immigration by 50% over the next ten years. Compared to the Religious Nones there was no group that had significantly higher approval for such a proposal. Two groups, Catholics and Atheists/Agnostics were significantly more opposed to the proposal.

The fourth immigration question asks for support for increasing spending on border security by $25 billion dollars including a border wall. When using the Religious Nones as out comparison group there is significantly more support for the proposal in all the religious groups except the OFN and the Atheist/Agnostic groups where there is no significant difference at all. Two groups, Baptist and the Other Christians, are significant at the 0.05 level and two, Nondenominationals and Catholics, are significant only at the 0.1 level.

This data gives us some interesting findings. The first is that while there are some movements that are less supportive of restrictive immigration policies, they are not consistent across the board. The OFN is significantly more in favor of granting legal status to working immigrants, but they were not significantly opposed when asked about reducing legal immigration. Catholics are significantly opposed to reducing legal immigration and they are opposed to increasing border spending by $25 billion dollars but there was no significant differences on the question of increasing border patrols.

If there is one religious movement that is more in favor of restrictive immigration policies, then it is the Nondenominationals. Nondenominationals were significantly more in favor of restrictive policies on three of the four proposals. Reducing legal immigration was the only proposal where a statistically significant effect could be found.

The other thing to notice is that while there was broad consensus among the more Evangelical religious movements it was not uniform. One question, granting legal pathways for immigrants who are working, found statistically significant differences between the Evangelical religious movements with the Other Christians more in favor of granting legal status to working immigrants than either the Baptists or the Nondenominationals. We also see numerous places where some movements in the Evangelical tradition are significantly different than Religious Nones and others are not. This demonstrates the value of this categorization scheme. It finds significant differences between religious movements that would be missed if we categorized religion based on a nationwide analysis of religious tradition.

DISCUSSION

This article finds evidence to support its hypothesis; the categorization scheme described in this paper does find statistically significant differences within the context of the state of Oklahoma. Oklahoma's religious and political makeup is remarkably different than the makeup of the United States as a whole. The state's political make-up is heavily Republican which affects the policies, candidates, and decisions of voters in a way that does not exist in the United States as a whole. Additionally, the religious make-up of Oklahoma is different than exists across the country. Oklahoma features a smaller percentage of non-Christian religious faiths, a smaller percentage of the population who identify as Roman Catholic, and a much higher percentage of Baptists.

As I have argued earlier, these differences affect the decisions of religious movements in who they are willing to work with. The American Baptist Church USA is a Mainline Religious Tradition. Nationally the ABCUSA is in the National Council of Churches. In Oklahoma however, the ABCUSA is not a member of the Oklahoma Faith Network. This most likely reflects the political and social context of ABCUSA churches in Oklahoma. The ABCUSA members in Oklahoma are more Republican than the average ABCUSA member nationwide. They are less comfortable, in a context where the label "Baptist" is the dominate form of Christianity in their local communities, in associating politically with the other churches in the Mainline religious tradition.

By categorizing Christianity with this methodology, we are also able to find differences within Evangelicalism. Evangelicals make up most Christians in the state of Oklahoma and therefore are dominate in influencing the state's religious impact on state politics. Baptists, Nondenominationals, and the Other Christians are not the same thing. There are differences between the three on political identification, support for candidates, and in their support for political and social issues.

This paper provides some interesting implications beyond the state of Oklahoma. The most important takeaway in this paper is that this is an effective method of identifying religious differences within a state context. Oklahoma is not just unique compared to the nation; Oklahoma is unique compared to the other 49 states. This is not unique to Oklahoma either. Each state has its own unique political and religious make-up. The states have their own unique demographics that differentiate them from one another. States in the Mountain West like Utah and Idaho famously have large populations of the Church of Latter-Day Saints. In the Midwest you would expect to find more Lutherans. In Alaska you would expect to find a higher percentage of Eastern Orthodox. Examples go on. Each of these differences is going to affect the decisions of religious movements on how they organize themselves politically.

Future researchers should take these differences seriously regardless of what state or region they are studying. Scholars of religion have long recognized that the division of religion into Protestant, Catholic, Jew (Hedberg 1955) is insufficient for analysis. What this paper indicates is that when researchers are interested in a specific state than religious tradition is not sufficient either. States have their own religious traditions. In Oklahoma we see that the separating the Mainline from non-Christian religions does not reflect the religious movements in state at all. This paper does not argue that Islam and Christian Mainline churches have the same beliefs. That would be absurd. Instead, this paper demonstrates that the Mainline and non-Christian faiths see natural partnership in Oklahoma because they are both religious minorities in the highly Evangelical and conservative state and are willing to work together.

As much as possible Political Scientists should take these movements seriously. We should not substitute our own judgments on what similarities and differences between movements are important. We should default on the judgement of the religious movements themselves. Obviously, we need some categorization scheme that is going to lump people together, but we should default to the categorizations that people create themselves. In Oklahoma there are three religious identities within Christianity that are sufficiently large to separate into their own movements: Baptists, Nondenominationals, and Catholics. The OFN is a formal, statewide, organization that allows us to separate the other aspects of Christianity but even though it is associated with the National Council of Churches its membership is not identical to the NCC and so a statewide categorization scheme should reflect the OFN and not the NCC. The OFN is also interfaith and not ecumenical. Therefore, is makes sense to include non-Christian religions into its organization. For the non-religious Oklahoma features two clear divisions; Atheists/Agnostics and the Non-Religious.

This paper also gives us some things to consider when focusing on

religion in the United States as a whole. While the current Reltrad scheme is roughly reflected in national religious movements like the National Council of Churches and the National Association of Evangelicals they are not identical. There are prominent denominations, like the Southern Baptist Convention, that are not members of the NAE. There are smaller organizations like the Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches of North America (PCCNA) that bring together the historically white and African American representations of a denominational family. These differences have significant social and political differences (Grant and Searcy 2018, Searcy 2019). More work should be done on the viability of refining a scheme of religious movements on the national level.

It is also important to say that this is the first cut and this categorization scheme, and more work should be done to refine it. In the interest of space, I have limited my analysis to a single state and a few high-profile political races and a couple of political issues. There is significantly more work to be done here. Future work should take these principles and apply them to other states. The different religious and political make-ups in each state would lead to different movements because the state's religious marketplace is going to be unique. While there is nothing in this paper that indicates that this is a uniquely Oklahoman phenomenon there is nothing here that proves it is not either. Expanding this research will require researchers to take the theoretical argument and apply it in other states to see if significant differences exist in those contexts as well.

With those weaknesses acknowledged I want to end with some encouraging thoughts. This paper finds evidence supporting the hypothesis that using religious movements as the basis for categorization is a valid methodology for researchers studying religion on a state-level. It gives researchers a powerful tool that reflects the diversity that exists in states across the country.

While the concept developed here is open to refinement and cri-

tique it proposes a consistent categorization methodology that is flexible enough to reflect the diversity that exists across the United States while also being able to reflect the development and changes that happen in the religious marketplace over time.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Michael Lewis. 2025. *Who Is Government?: The Untold Story of Public Service.* Riverhead Books.

I find that in a world where the role of government is increasingly scrutinized, especially with the advent of the Department of Governmental Efficiency (DOGE), Michael Lewis's edited book, *Who Is Government?*, is both timely and a breath of fresh air.

Likewise, it seems like an appropriate and essential exploration of the unsung heroes working behind the scenes. To me, this compilation of essays sheds light on the dedication, expertise, and often-overlooked contributions of federal employees. By weaving together compelling narratives, Lewis challenges the prevailing, but unfortunate, stereotypes that constantly paint government workers as inefficient bureaucrats, revealing instead their profound commitment to the public good.

Lewis's writing has gravitas; he has quite a track record. For example, his 2006 book, *The Blind Side: Evolution of a Game*, was later adapted into a film of the same name three years later. By 2010, he released *The Big Short: Inside the Doomsday Machine*, which explained the Great Recession of 2008. Later, his adaptation of *Moneyball* was released in 2011, followed by *The Big Short* in 2015. Albeit less renowned, my favorite of his books is *The Fifth Risk*, which examines the somewhat surreal transition of political appointments from former President Obama to the first Trump administration with a focus on three government agencies – the Departments of Commerce, Agriculture, and Energy.

A GLIMPSE BEHIND THE CURTAIN

Lewis invites readers into the often-opaque world of federal institutions, exposing the human stories that drive them. Each profile, I find, is a testament to the passionate individuals whose daily efforts keep the nation functioning smoothly. From the mine inspectors safeguarding worker safety to the IRS agents combating cybercrime, the book showcases how these public servants operate

not for accolades or financial gain, but for a higher purpose: the welfare of their fellow citizens, the public good.

In Lewis's first fascinating chapter, titled "The Canary," he discusses Chris Mark of the Department of Labor, who, as a former miner himself, solved the problem of coal mine roofs collapsing on the heads of coal miners, which killed 50,000 coal miners in the last century. To me, he is a largely unrecognized hero who saved thousands of lives over the years. Yet, we know about him?

I find that these narratives are not only informative but also emotionally resonant. As Lewis highlights the personal journeys of these individuals, he emphasizes their commitment to public service. This is particularly poignant in a society where such dedication is frequently overshadowed by cynicism and skepticism regarding government efficacy.

One reason he wrote the book, he says early on, is because: "Our government, as opposed to our elected officials, has no talent for telling its own story." This means, the people, like our students, must speak up for our institutions that make life livable for most Americans.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC SERVICE

One of the book's central themes is the vital role that public servants play in society. Lewis underscores that these individuals are not just cogs in a bureaucratic machine; they are the backbone of a functioning democracy. The efforts they undertake—such as ensuring the provision of safe drinking water, regulating food safety, and safeguarding the environment—are critical to maintaining the health and well-being of the community. We can't live without these services if we want to preserve a good life for most Americans.

Unfortunately, in a time when many view government as a necessary evil, or even unnecessary to people like the richest man on

Earth, Elon Musk, the book serves as a reminder of the importance of investing in public service. The book argues that the effectiveness of government hinges on the dedication and expertise of its employees. Lewis adeptly illustrates how cutting resources or dismantling agencies doesn't just impact bureaucratic efficiency; it compromises the lives of everyday citizens.

CHALLENGING STEREOTYPES

What I find most important here is that Lewis's writing goes beyond simply illuminating the roles of federal employees; it actively confronts stereotypes that often cloud public perception. As he states, "My own ambition for this book was that it would subvert the stereotype of the civil servant. The typecasting has always been lazy and stupid, but increasingly, it's deadly."

The book's story of various public servants reveals that government workers are not merely faceless bureaucrats; they are individuals driven by a sense of responsibility and purpose. Each chapter is a powerful rebuttal to the notion that public service is synonymous with inefficiency or waste.

For instance, Lewis profiles Heather Stone, a woman at the Food and Drug Administration who tracks exotic diseases. Her work saved lives, demonstrating that behind every regulation is a person committed to safeguarding public health. Such stories function as a counter-narrative to the simplistic and often negative portrayals of government workers that dominate public discourse.

A CALL TO ACTION

Who Is Government? is not merely a collection of essays on public servants; it is a clarion call for renewed respect and support for public service. Lewis implores readers to recognize the vital contributions of those who work for the common good. He challenges us to rethink our relationship with government, urging a more nuanced understanding of its complexities and challenges.

I like how he uses a patriotic quote to challenge the public to serve, right before the introduction, by former President John F. Kennedy: "Let the public service be a proud and lively career. And let every man and woman who works in any area of our national government, in any branch at any level, be able to say with pride and with honor in future years: 'I served the United States Government in that hour of our nation's need.'"

The book poses critical questions: What would happen if these roles were eliminated? How would society function without the oversight and dedication of these workers? These inquiries force readers to confront the reality that public service is not just a job; it is a calling that impacts millions of lives.

I also find that it is a timely testament to showcasing the importance of government work, even if it needs reform. And yet it is currently being sabotaged in the name of "waste, fraud, and abuse." DODGE found only a fraction of what they alleged, since they found less than $200 billion, which represents a tenth of their goal. And what they found was questionable at best.

A RESOURCE FOR STUDENTS OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

This book is particularly valuable as a supplemental text for students studying the evergreen political science staple American Government, or more specifically, an introduction to public administration. It offers insights that can help bridge the gap between theory and practice, encouraging students to see the real-world implications of their studies. By showcasing relatable stories of public servants, Lewis makes the case for public service as a viable and noble career path. In an era when the need for dedicated individuals in public roles is more urgent than ever, *Who Is Government?* It is a book that functions as an inspiring guide for aspiring political science majors and public administration students.

Understanding the nuances of public service can motivate students to engage more deeply with their coursework and consider careers where they can make a tangible difference. The narratives presented in this book can serve as both inspiration and a roadmap for those looking to contribute meaningfully to society as a kind of career guide through learning about current federal governmental roles. It reminds me of how, in Lewis's chapter "The Searchers," Dave Eggers found his calling at NASA. While he wasn't wowed by the surrounding aesthetics of Pasadena's Jet Propulsion Lab campus, he found it to be "the most inspiring research and exploration being done by any humans on our planet."

A NARRATIVE RICH IN HUMANITY

One of the key strengths of Lewis's work lies in its narrative style. His ability to humanize the subjects, coupled with engaging storytelling, makes the book both accessible and thought-provoking. I was drawn into the lives of these public servants, experiencing their triumphs and struggles firsthand. This intimate approach fosters empathy and understanding, encouraging a reevaluation of how we view government workers.

Lewis's writing is infused with a sense of urgency, making it clear that the stories of these individuals are not just important, they are essential. Their work shapes the fabric of society, and by highlighting their contributions, Lewis invites readers to appreciate the often-invisible scaffolding that supports our daily lives.

Ultimately, this book is a celebration of the spirit of service. It challenges us to recognize the significance of government in our lives and to appreciate the extraordinary efforts of those who work to make our society better. As we navigate the complexities of modern governance, Lewis's work serves as both an inspiration and a call to action, reminding us that the heart of democracy lies in the hands of its public servants.

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Chapman, J. David. (2025). *subURBAN! Reimagining the Suburban Downtown*. Edmond, OK: Clear to Close Publishing.

First of all, this book is a joy to read. Although Chapman is a professor of business, *subURBAN* is clearly addressed to a much broader audience than his fellow academics. The tone is personal, lively, and engaging. At the same time, this book tackles one of the most pressing but often overlooked challenges of American development: the reinvention of the suburban core. Where earlier scholarship has focused either on metropolitan centers or the decline of rural communities, Chapman directs attention to the vast swaths of American life organized around *suburban* municipalities. These spaces have traditionally been designed for cars, single-family zoning, and commercial sprawl. His work contends that the long-term viability of these communities depends on transforming their downtowns into walkable, mixed-use, and culturally vibrant centers. A main theme of this book is how city leaders can build *resilience* in their communities. As Chapmain notes, "Resilient cities are not necessarily the wealthiest, but they are the best organized" (p. 208). This book is a plan of action for such local-level collaboration to succeed!

One of the distinctive strengths of the book is its reliance on an ethnographic mode of inquiry reminiscent of Richard Fenno's classic "soak and poke" method of participant observation. Rather than approaching suburban transformation solely through statistical models, policy reports, or secondary literature, Chapman grounds his analysis in his own extended engagement to improve the City of Edmond. He walks its streets, patronizes local businesses, and regularly participates in public meetings and town events. He immerses himself in the lived experience of residents and local leaders. Chapman even served as an elected member of the city council in the very community that he analyzes here. At the same time, Chapman is himself a successful real estate investor who specializes in the development of Edmond's downtown area. These unique perspectives allow him to capture the textures

of suburban life—the skepticism of homeowners toward redevelopment, the aspirations of city officials, and the cultural meanings attached to suburban downtowns. In doing so, Chapman's work extends a tradition in political science that values observation and presence to bridge the gap between policy vision and everyday democratic practice. He does not describe himself this way, but Chapman is an activist at heart. But he works within the established system of community leaders and stakeholders because he is one of them. He frames his calls for action through this deeply personal narrative.

From a political science and public policy perspective, the book makes an important normative contribution. Chapman emphasizes how suburban form is not merely an architectural or planning question but one that shapes civic identity, social cohesion, and ultimately democratic vitality. In his telling, revitalized suburban downtowns can provide public goods by fostering participation, economic resilience, and inclusivity. This framing aligns his project with broader currents in New Urbanism and smart growth policies, while situating suburban design firmly within debates about governance and democracy.

This book convincingly addresses many of the practical realities of suburban governance. Chapman acknowledges citizens' resistance to change as well as how entrenched zoning codes constrain redevelopment. As a partial solution, he points to the importance of approving variances as the situation warrants (p. 52). Political scientists would note that suburban governance often magnifies collective action problems, with competing interests undermining comprehensive planning. In this respect, *subURBAN!* risks offering a vision that is aspirational. He continually points to the city of Edmond as a concrete demonstration of what is possible. However, he avoids discussing the distinctive edge that Edmond has over most other cities in Oklahoma. Chapman mentions only briefly in passing, the unique struggle of how a municipality in Oklahoma must rely almost exclusively on sales tax for its revenue (p. 133).

Interstate 35 intersects Edmond making it a prime location for retail sales from outsiders. Also, the book does not mention the rare advantage in Oklahoma that the City of Edmond has in retaining its own municipal electrical system and the accompanying cash flow. Most Oklahoma municipalities rely on electrical power from investor-owned utilities such as OG&E and the Public Service Company of Oklahoma (PSO).

The book inspires with its imagery of revitalized suburban spaces. Chapman's call for reimagining the suburban downtown is best viewed as a manifesto, but it also offers a practicable agenda. The book's strength lies in its capacity to provoke debate. By foregrounding questions of equity—Who benefits from suburban redevelopment? Who is displaced?—Chapman raises essential issues about whether suburban revitalization can genuinely advance inclusivity or whether it will reinforce patterns of exclusion through rising property values and gentrification. In doing so, the book contributes to ongoing policy conversations about how place-making intersects with social justice. He offers the city of Edmond as an exemplar for other suburban municipalities. In sum, *subURBAN!* is best understood as a vision-casting text. It offers an imaginative and accessible framework for what suburban downtowns could become but leaves the task of navigating institutional complexity, political feasibility, and distributive justice to others. Political scientists and policymakers alike will find the book a stimulating starting point. Its greatest value lies in encouraging community leaders in their difficult follow-up work of transforming vision into actionable governance strategies.

Perhaps because of its central focus on walkability *downtown*, Chapman does not spend any time examining Edmond's impressive system of extensive sidewalks and trails linking the major parks and neighborhoods through the university and central city. However, he does devote a whole chapter to the City of Edmond's remarkable collection of public art and plans for future expansion. He also fully addresses the contentious issues surrounding park-

ing. Taken together, these discussions underscore how symbolic amenities and practical infrastructure both shape the identity of a suburban downtown.

As a self-published book, it sometimes suffers from the lack of professional editing. For example, his prefatory text comes under the heading of "Forward" and the author probably meant, "Foreword." Even here, most editors would recognize that forewords are usually written by someone other than the author. "Preface" would be the preferred term here. Chapman maintains a perspective of progress as a main theme throughout this book. In that light, "Forward" is an apt title for this introductory section. But even in this "Forward" section, an editor would not likely miss the two times that Chapman uses "principals" rather than the correct term in this context, "principles." In addition, there are no in-text citations or footnotes. Readers must dive into the "Reference List" on their own to make educated guesses about which work mentioned there links directly to the text. For example, Chapman asserts, "Studies have shown that communities with well-funded schools tend to have lower crime rates" (p. 8). What studies? Perusing through the references at the end does not yield an obvious answer.

Chapman's *subURBAN* is a wonderful primer on the politics of reinvigorating local downtown areas. It is of particular interest to scholars of urban politics, local governance, and public policy, as well as practitioners seeking to rethink the suburban built environment. This book will become one of the main supplementary texts in the next *Urban Planning and Politics* course that I teach. Students will appreciate this book's novel feature of using numerous QR codes throughout to help readers quickly link to relevant information on the web. The nice assortment of pictures sprinkled throughout yields a welcome vitality to this work. Students can also take advantage of the callout boxes and glossary to nail down definitions of relevant concepts and planning terms. Chapman hints at the possibility of a second edition (p. 237). He should strongly consider the addition of an index as a feature that would

be of great value for both students and scholars.

Finally, the book chronicles the important developmental evolution of one of Oklahoma's most successful cities. It will continue to be a resource for Edmond community stakeholders and a benchmark for other local governments. This book successfully encapsulates contemporary thinking among urban planners and how it has played out in one suburban community.

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Party politics is the most narrow-minded occupation in the World." - Will Rogers

I was approached by a colleague to do a review of the book, *Will Rogers and his America* by Gary Clayton Anderson published in 2011. This felt like a good opportunity to learn more about a man for whom I had familiarity, but not in-depth knowledge. If you look around the state, you will see many efforts to honor "Oklahoma's Favorite Son." In fact, I grew up in *Rogers County*, named after Will's father Clem (OK Historical Society, 2025). Many field trips in school were to visit the Will Rogers Memorial Museum in Claremore. I took Intro to American Federal Government with Dr. Kenneth Hicks at Rogers State University. I routinely fly out of the Will Rogers International Airport. Attending graduate school at Texas Tech University I always found it peculiar that they revered Will Rogers with a statue in the middle of campus which they decorated ceremoniously for homecoming. As a proud Oklahoman, my first thought was, "Get your own heroes Texas, this one is ours!" I returned to the memorial museum in preparation of this book review where I met with the Executive Director (and former Oklahoma State Representative) Tad Jones. He explained to me the significance of the statue in relation to Rogers' deep friendship with Texan Amon Carter, a media mogul, oil man, and Texas Tech graduate. Further, Rogers' donated the money for the school's band to travel to an away game and coined the nickname still used today, the "*Goin Band from Raiderland*." The reality is that Rogers was influential across the entire country and even the world. In this review, I will discuss my recent exploration into Rogers' life through the book and museum, the notable events including those related to politics, and the similarities and contradictions of viewpoints found in each.

In the afterword of Anderson's biography, he addresses the same

question I had, "Do we need yet another, somewhat new biography of Rogers?" (205). There is only so much you can say about the fifty-five year life of a single person, even if he was at the time of his death, as the museum claims, the most famous man in the world. There is even a book dedicated to over 1,000 of Rogers' quotes (Sterling, 1995). Anderson's answer seems to be that this book differentiates itself from others in emphasizing Rogers' perception of himself as a journalist above all else. After reading the book I am not sure I would have told you this is the main theme, despite chapter five being dedicated specifically to Rogers' journalism. It could be argued that the previous detailed chapters needed to be thoroughly explored in order to understand Rogers' path to journalism and the corresponding impact on American culture.

The book begins by detailing the Rogers family's early beginnings in Indian Territory during the Civil War. Will's father, Clem, was an influential politician bridging the gap between the Native, State, and Federal politics. Both of Will's parents had similar Cherokee blood quantum and his mother, Mary, frequently spoke Cherokee in the home. His father supported slavery and sided with the South during the war. After the war, his parents moved back to their ranch (60,000 acres) in Indian Territory and in 1879 Will was born and was their only surviving son. The book frequently discusses Will's reticence in acknowledging his Native heritage, making efforts to shirk off stereotypes and even seemingly expressing shame. I would argue that the Memorial Museum gives the opposite impression, claiming pride in the Rogers family Native heritage. I also learned at the museum that the Cherokee Nation has purchased the Rogers' Ranch House in Oolagah and has invested in a complete restoration (Bryan 2025).

In the discussion of Rogers' hesitance to embrace his Native heritage, one might argue that it was a product of the time period. Certainly, Native Americans were treated horribly during this time and even the Rogers' family took allotments for their homestead,

significantly shrinking the size of their ranch[1]. In further recognition of the time period, Anderson does recognize Rogers' involvement with "coon songs" and black face which denigrated African Americans and used language which demonstrated the perception that former slaves were ignorant and incompetent. It was peculiar that the following statement was included in this discussion, "It should be noted that some Black vaudeville performers also performed the songs–either lacking concern regarding their message or sublimating those concerns because of the need for money" (15). This comment seemed to make an effort to ward off the "but what about!" readers while fitting poorly within the focus of the section of the book.

Much of this book was quite entertaining to read, largely told as a chronological history of Rogers' life. There were stories that made me laugh out loud, such as when Rogers' planned to visit Argentina to avoid his obligations on his family's ranch. He did not realize he would have to travel to London first to catch a boat south and spent all of his money before he ever arrived. That story also led to what could be considered the most pivotal time period of Rogers' life, broadening his horizons not only geographically, but in his understanding of experiences of people across the world. Those travels also led to his start in entertainment and rope tricks which I would wager many Oklahomans would be surprised to learn began in earnest in Africa. Anderson also points out that Rogers came home "from his travels with a deep appreciation for the United States" (22). Rogers' act expanded to Vaudeville where he would tell self-deprecating jokes, with an image built around being the "consummate outsider" all while doing rope tricks. Over a short amount of time his salary began to grow quickly as his show became more popular (31-33). One limitation of this book is that the timelines jump back and forth sometimes from one sentence to the next, making it difficult at times for the reader to keep up with the order of events.

1 Later in his life after amassing his fortune, Will sent money home to purchase additional land, growing their estate.

Rogers' career continued, exploding with the *Ziegfeld Follies* and even into film. He met with and sometimes even entertained several Presidents including Roosevelt, Wilson, Harding[2], Coolidge, Hoover, and had a close friendship with Franklin Roosevelt. He had friendships with the entertainment elite, which the author attributes to much of Rogers' shift in world-view (56). He also had international relationships with prominent leaders such as Edward VIII and Mussolini. In the chapter titled "The Renaissance," Anderson details the turning point in Rogers' career moving from vaudeville entertainer to commentator on the American experience, beginning with a contract to provide weekly "witty sayings" to a syndicated column carried in a variety of newspapers. Anderson continues, "Between 1919 and 1925, Rogers metamorphosed from a one-dimensional comic and writer who covered politics at a superficial level to a confident commentator on the rich, the industrial entrepreneurs of the age, European royalty, politicians, Hollywood mega-stars, and especially the common man. He kept his columns at a stylistic level that the average reader could appreciate." (56). Roger's column the *Illiterate Digest* was read widely and influenced acts of Congress and behaviors of Presidents. He spoke at both Democratic and Republican conventions. When I visited the Memorial Museum, my discussions included this fact about Rogers. They seemed to take great pride in Rogers' ability to have dialogue with people from both sides of the aisle, the implication being that a man like Rogers with his level of influence, likeability, and pragmatic nature to the country's problems would be welcome in today's politics. Anderson claims that by the late 1920s, "virtually every American politician listened to Rogers" (126). At that time nearly 400 newspapers syndicated Rogers' columns.

This book is well researched and an interesting perspective on American history and the impact of an individual born in Indian Territory. Rogers was full of contradictions from his wrestling

2 Rogers largely had a negative relationship with Harding (71) and was critical of the Hoover administration's handling of the Great Depression (134-152).

with his own Native heritage, his progressive views on civil rights, his avid advocacy for the middle class while amassing significant wealth and even avoiding the hardships of the Great Depression resulting from his skepticism of bankers and the stock market. This book describes Rogers as a man willing to evolve his viewpoints over time while owing his popularity to his approachable way of communicating to massive audiences. He was a capitalist at heart but believed in government support for those in need. This book describes Rogers' various forays in journalism, but ultimately this story is told as his columns were merely a vehicle to his many ways of influencing American politics of which I struggle to come up with a modern-day comparison. Rogers' story is one worthy of careful consideration and this book brings up many parallels an observer of politics could recognize today. Rogers' legacy stands the test of time and I am encouraged to explore more in the future. Unfortunately, the Rogers family historic ranch house was destroyed in the Palisades Fire in Los Angeles earlier this year. However, renovations to the Oolagah home are scheduled to be completed next year. Additionally, the Memorial Museum in Claremore is undergoing significant expansion including the use of AI technology[3] in their planned exhibits.

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3 I recognize that future political scientists will find it amusing that the use of AI technology in a museum was novel at the time of this publication.

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Rolison, W. Edward and Carol Duncan. *Route 66 and the Story of Sam Hawks: Pioneer, Entrepreneur, Politician*

Sam Hawks is a name that most people do not know. He was someone whose importance to western Oklahoma is easily missed. He is one of those classic historical characters who worked mostly behind the scenes. He was never elected or served in a particularly high office. He was born outside of Oklahoma and did not arrive in the state until after statehood, so he missed the famous land runs and the ratification of Oklahoma's Constitution. He helped in the development of Oklahoma, but his impact was largely felt in western Oklahoma and not in either of the metro areas of Oklahoma and Tulsa. Western Oklahoma has never been one of the major focus of historians whose have studied Oklahoma. This is a tough road to how for a biography. To tell the story of Sam Hawks does not just involve telling Hawks' story but also explaining to the reader why they need to care about the story of Sam Hawks. Thankfully the authors, W. Edward Rolison and Carol Duncan, do just that.

Sam Hawks was born in Tennessee in 1882 before coming to western Oklahoma in 1909. The book follows the life of Hawks throughout his life from his birth in Tennessee in the late 1800s until his death. After telling of his birth and early life in Tennessee the book primarily focuses on Hawks' life in Oklahoma. Hawks' early years in Oklahoma as a hotel operator in Clinton, OK. He then became a postmaster who developed and expanding routes in western Oklahoma, serves as the campaign manager for Bill Murray's successful campaign for the Governorship during the 1930s, and eventually he became Chairman for the Oklahoma Highway Commission which helped to bring Route 66 through western Oklahoma. The authors do a good job of putting Hawks' impact into context which helps the reader see how this unknown figure made a lasting impact on Oklahoma that still affects Oklahoma today.

The most important thing about this book is that it is not just about Sam Hawks. If Rolison and Duncan had only told the story of Sam Hawks himself then the book would still be of interest to people interested in the history of Oklahoma. The book might not have a lot of interest beyond that. Instead Rolison and Duncan use Hawks as a lens to tell the story of Oklahoma, particularly western Oklahoma. The authors cleverly realize that to understand Hawks' impact they need to put Hawks in his historical context. The growth and development of Clinton as a western hub between Oklahoma City and western Texas is one of the areas they spend some time on because of how important Hawks was to that development. This focus expands the potential audience of the book considerably. A modern reader may not recognize the name 'Sam Hawks' but they will recognize Clinton, OK. Rolison and Duncan demonstrate that Clinton might be a completely different place if Sam Hawks had not arrived in town in 1909.

The extreme willingness of the book to depart from Sam Hawks himself is the book's greatest strength. This is particularly true when the authors introduce Alfalfa Bill Murray into the narrative. There are chapters of the book, particularly the chapter dealing with the failed Bolivian colony led by Murray, where Hawks disappears from the narrative. Rolison and Duncan check in on Hawks but there are sections of the book that function as a profile of Murray. Murray is a fascinating character to read about in 2025. The authors see, quite accurately, that Murray is a Trump like character during his peak. This helps the reader to bring this period of history to life. Sam Hawks is not just developing roads and postal routes that impact western Oklahoma, but he exists in a political context that readers can see reflected in modern times. This once again strengthens one of my main takeaways from the book… the story of Sam Hawks is not one that is limited to historians. His story mirrors the politics of our own time.

The authors do a clever job of using tons of photographs and other images throughout the text. One of the ways that the topic is

brought alive is by constantly using images to help the reader. They do not simply tell you about the hotels that Hawks built in Clinton… they show you the hotel. When discussing Alfalfa Bill's back-and-forth with the society editor of the Daily Oklahoma the book provides the reader with a large photograph of the society editor. You do not have to flip to a glossy section in the middle of the book either. The authors integrate the dozens, if not hundreds, of images into the text throughout the book. This is extremely important given that this biography has many locations and characters that appear throughout the book. There is also Clinton itself, a character, that changes and evolves over the decades of Hawks' life. Rolison and Duncan do an excellent job of tracking those changes over time with newspaper excepts, primary sources, and images that help the reader track where they are at any given time.

If I had one criticism of the book it comes from the book's greatest strength, I am not sure I understand Hawks' character. Rolison and Duncan are obviously limited by their historical source material, but I would have loved to know more about Hawks' internal thoughts. The book does an excellent job of placing Hawks' actions in their context. I know a great deal about what Hawks did and how western Oklahoma continues to benefit from him. I would have liked to learn more about what Hawks thought. Why has Hawks drawn to Murray? Given that he knew Murray why did Hawks stay in western Oklahoma and not go to Bolivia? The authors give some information but questions like that are largely unanswered beyond speculation. This is due to the primary sources that Rolison and Duncan have to rely on but it does make Hawks himself a figure like Charles Foster Kane. Hawks remains this figure who has this great impact on the state and yet is almost tantalizingly out of reach. We know what he did but can only speculate on why he did it.

I enjoyed *Sam Hawks* a great deal. It is the kind of book that can be enjoyed by people interested in the history of western Oklahoma and Oklahoma politics in general. It tells the story of someone

who wasn't always the guy but was the guy who the guy depended on. It explores the Oklahoma of the past but connects it to the Oklahoma of today.

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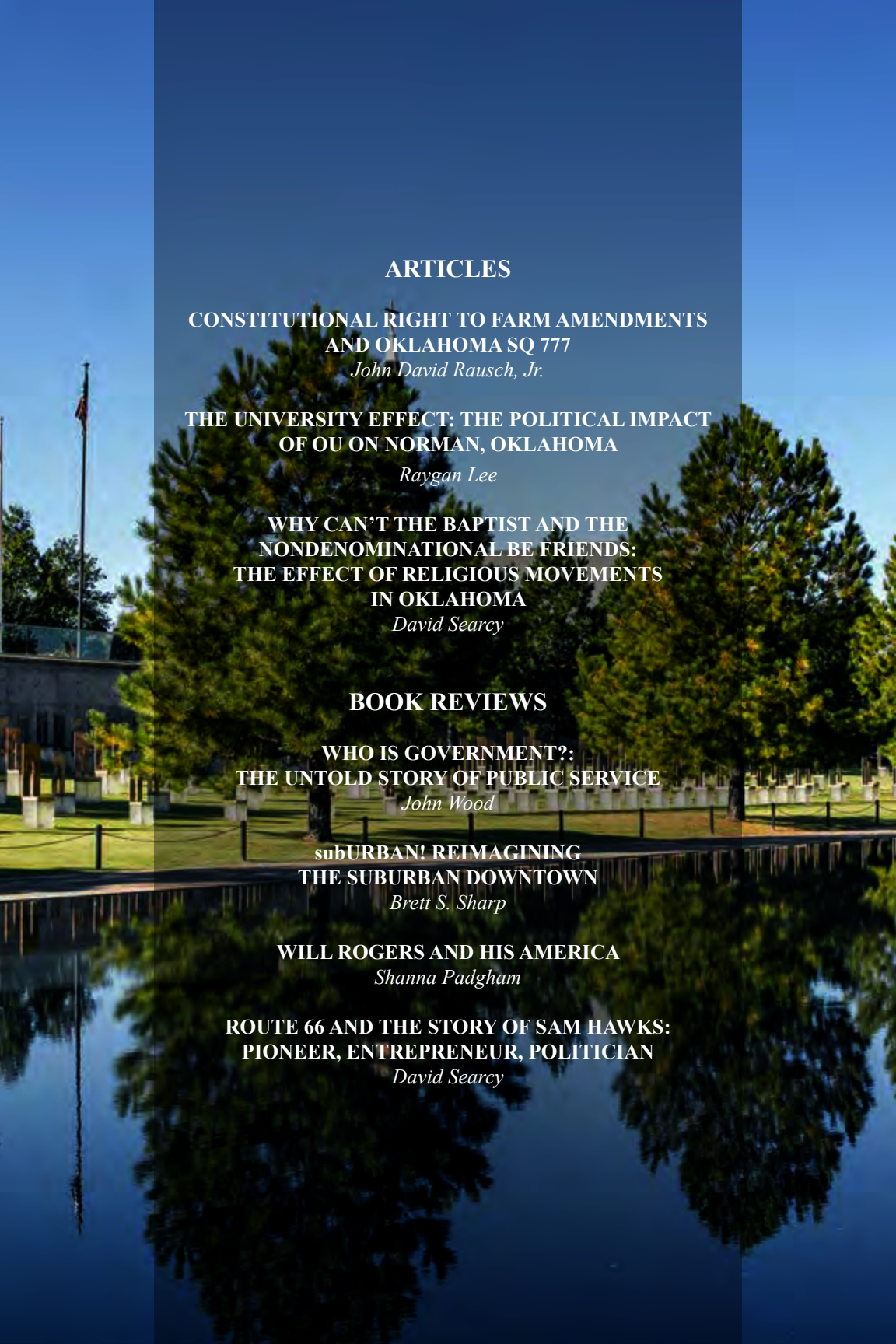

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