

Dear Respected Members of the Washington County Republican Party,

We hope everyone is doing well. There is a lot of excitement going on in our Nation, our State and in our City wherein the passionate discussion of politics and policy seem to be pervasive. We believe that these conversations are vital to the successful future of our Nation, our State, our County, and our City of Bartlesville. As such, we want to share really exciting news, the Washington County GOP, currently has 450+ delegates signed up for the upcoming Washington County Convention. These numbers are larger than both Tulsa County's delegation and Oklahoma County's County Delegation. In fact, this number is the highest number in the State. As such, this is something to be proud of and we believe reflects the desire and commitment of Washington County citizens to have a voice. As your Chairman of the Washington County GOP, we can express the importance of giving everyone a voice as well as continuing with transparency, integrity and inclusion. Individual ideas, thoughts and concerns are important to the success of any organization; however, at the end of the day, functioning as a team is vital to overall success. That is to say, the taking these ideas and conforming into an overall majority is the foundation of Governance at all levels. In our Country and State, the minority opinion has never ruled but certainly it should be respected and heard.

Over the past two weeks, a minority faction of the WCGOP has taken action to express their voice. As a result, we have heard from many of you expressing concern and disdain with the actions being taken. While, opposition views are not always comfortable, we must have the ability as Americans and Oklahomans to respectfully express our views and at the end of that expression come together to effectuate positive change.

Please find below a timeline of events that have occurred beginning with the February 20, 2023 Washington County Precinct Meeting through March 11, 2023 wherein all members of the OKGOP received a Letter from OKGOP Member Lauren Murray. There has been much debate in the past two weeks about OKGOP Rules. These rules can be found at <https://okgop.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/2021-State-Party-Rules.pdf>.

### **Precinct Meeting February 20, 2023**

On **February 20**, at the call of Chairman Mike Lessard, all Precincts convened to elect new precinct officers and take up business pertaining to the County Convention. Twenty-four (24) Precincts were present and two precincts were absent. Forty-seven (47) Precinct Chairs and Vice Chair positions were elected; where as, five (5) Precinct Chair and Vice Chair Positions were not present or filled. In accordance with State Party Rules, the vacant positions were filled at the appointment made by Chairman Mike Lessard and Vice Chairman Alex Johnson. Ultimately, this resulted in Washington County having one hundred percent (100%) involvement at the County Committee level. This is a remarkable outcome and all GOP registered members should be proud.

Also, on **February 20**, each Precinct voted to attend the upcoming County Convention as an open delegation. An “Open Delegation” means that the Precinct members voted to allow anyone that wishes to attend the County Convention on behalf of their Precinct the same rights as those present on the night of the February 20 Precinct Meeting. Below is a further explanation of the “Open Delegation” process.

Moreover, at the **February 20**, Precinct meeting ten (10) total resolutions passed from the various Precincts effectuating and setting up the various County Committees: Convention Rules Committee, Convention Credential Committee and Convention Platform Committee. After conforming the resolutions as prescribed by the OKGOP Rules, Six (6) resolutions were passed to the Convention Platform Committee. Additionally, Eight (8) members requested to volunteer their service on the Convention Rules Committee and Five (5) members requested serve on the Convention Credentials Committee and twelve (12) members requested service on the Convention Platform Committee. These names were passed to the respective chairmen of these committees. These committees have begun work and the Rules and Convention Platform Committees have already met. Please see further details herein regarding the meetings that have taken place.

### **Open Delegation Process**

**February 24, 5:00 pm** was the deadline to register for the County Convention per the Open Delegation resolution and rules set forth at the Precinct Meeting.

All interested registered Washington County GOP members were able to register for the County Convention by two means: 1) they could sign up for the meeting at the Precinct Meeting or 2) registration could occur by sending a members name, address, voter identification number, email and phone number to [info@washingtoncountygop.com](mailto:info@washingtoncountygop.com). On February 24, 2023 at approximately 4:48 p.m., the names that were collected via both means of registration were entered into one spreadsheet of registered delegates and sent to Chairman Lessard at [info@washingtoncountygop.com](mailto:info@washingtoncountygop.com) to effectuate a proper time stamp ensuring that those delegates had met the registration requirements. There were no names that came in between 4:48 p.m. and 5:00 p.m., the prescribed deadline. However, there were twelve (12) names that came in after 5:00 p.m. and as a result these names were not added to the delegate roll. Overall, we have 461 proposed delegates that will be presented to the County Convention for admission and acceptance. This number is not only a record for Washington County but is also the largest county convention in the State of Oklahoma in the 2023 convention cycle. We applaud the interest, the patriotism and excitement as expressed by our GOP membership.

The Credentials Committee Chairman reviewed this list on the evening of **February 24, 2023** to verify and authenticate the proposed list of delegates. This preliminary list was finalized at said meeting was formally sent to Chairman Lessard and candidate for County Chairman Larry Murray asking that both individuals review the

proposed list of delegates for accuracy, clerical issues or omissions. The County Chairman Lessard identified several missing names from the attendees of the Precinct Meeting held on February 20, 2023 that had been omitted as a clerical error from the proposed list. The Credentials Chairman on behalf of the Credentials Committee acknowledged said error and the proposed list was amended. State Committeeman and County Chairman Candidate Murray did not respond to said request for review.

**In the past week (March 6-10)** the Convention Credentials Chairman has been validating the information submitted to verify final eligibility. In other words, the Committee is tasked with ensuring that all delegates registered republicans are within the boundaries of Washington County and the Precinct to which they are registered. At this time, the Credentials Chairman has verified 461 candidates are within their boundaries and correctly registered in their precinct; however, three (3) names have been sent to the State Election Board office to obtain verification and clarification.

### **County Committee Meetings**

As stated above, since February 24, 2023 the Credentials Chairman has since that time been working to verify for presentment 461 delegates to the upcoming Washington County Convention.

**On March 9<sup>th</sup>**, at the call of the Convention Rules Committee Chairman Beffer, the Convention Rules Committee met to discuss the proposed rules that will govern the business of the County Convention. The minutes are attached hereto. Two things are worth noting. First, all of those that requested to be on the committee were invited to attend. Second, the rules were passed without a single objection to the merits. There was one “no” vote that related to a technical matter over the verbiage “heard” versus “read”.

**On March 14<sup>th</sup>**, at the call of the Convention Platform Committee Chairman Daniels, the Convention Platform Committee met to discuss the resolutions presented by the precincts. The minutes are attached hereto. Please note that all Convention Platform Committeeman were in favor of submitting all resolutions presented to the body at the convention, inclusive of those resolutions that set up the various County Committees.

In essence, all three committees have been populated, officers have been put into place, and these bodies have been meeting in accordance with OKGOP Rules.

### **The Special Meeting, March 10, 2023**

**On March 4<sup>th</sup>**, Chairman Lessard was hand-delivered a County Committee Special Meeting call signed by 15 members of the County Committee. In the Special Meeting call, the signatories outlined three orders of business: 1) The credentials list and pass a resolution to disqualify a majority of the delegates, 2) Appoint members to the Convention Rules, Platform, and Credentials Committees and 3) Pass the Resolution removing a majority of the registered delegates.

After consulting with legal counsel at the State, Chairman Lessard and Vice Chairman Johnson issued a response that such a meeting could not be called because the identified agenda was out of order and violates State Party rules. As such, the State GOP instructed the County Chair to respectfully decline the meeting. A letter was sent to the 15 members declining the call for a Special Meeting. Moreover, the response suggested that their concerns would be better brought forth at the County Convention per the OKGOP Rules.

**On March 5<sup>th</sup>**, despite the respectful response to handle this matter at the County Convention, the call for a County Committee Meeting was made at the order of 15 Committee Members, which constituted one fourth (1/4) of the voting County Committee voting membership. Attached hereto is their call. Recognizing the prerogative and authority of the County Committee, Chairman Lessard and Vice Chairman began preparing for the meeting pursuant to State Party Rules.

Please note that the meeting was set for Friday, March 10, 2023, 7:00 p.m. Calvary Chapel Church. Prior to the Meeting, the County Committee Voting Members were notified that the meeting would be a closed meeting. It is customary and regular practice to close Special Meetings. The intent behind the closed meeting is to allow all an opportunity to voice concerns without the threat or pressure from outside guests and protestors. The gathering room was set up for its 58 members.

**On March 10<sup>th</sup>**, between 6:15 p.m. and 7:00 p.m., forty-six (46) County Committee credentialed voting members signed in individually and through credentialed proxies. The official sign-in and proxy forms are available for inspection upon request.

Prior to the call of order to the meeting, a confrontation was initiated by two guests, Lauren Murray and Sandy Roberts (an individual from outside of our community) and one County Committeewoman, Kayla Schaffner with volunteers checking in Committee Members as well as other County Committeemen. The three women contended that the meeting was open and demanded through inappropriate actions (shouting, screaming and pushing) that all be allowed to attend. The off duty officer present requested that the three women respectfully act appropriately and that anyone not allowed in the closed meeting please step outside. Kayla Schaffner without proper authority or notice then called for a new meeting to convene in the Sanctuary at Calvary Chapel Church. Various County Committee Voting Members, Vice Chair Alex Johnson, Chair Mike Lessard, State Committeewoman Juli Merciez, and District Committeeman Kaleb Potter respectfully requested that all voting County Committee Members convene peacefully in the gathering room and then have an opportunity to voice their concerns at said meeting. Unfortunately, Sherriff Owen, Sergeant at Arms, also had to intervene and requested that those upset please peacefully leave and contact the State GOP for further guidance. A second Sherriff's deputy was dispatched at the request of Sherriff Owen to maintain peaceful assembly.

On **March 10**, Chairman Mike Lessard called the meeting to Order, at 7:04 p.m. Acting Interim, Secretary Deb Cook, reported that 46 registered Republican Washington County Committeemen were signed in for the Special Meeting. Secretary Cook then noted that 24 members were currently present and that 22 members had left to call their own meeting. Chairman Mike Lessard in consult with Parliamentarian, Mary Lynn Mihm-Howk, determined that a quorum was present with 50% +1. Chairman Lessard welcomed all in attendance. He advised that 22 Committeeman decided to not attend the meeting in protest to the meeting being a closed meeting. Chairman Lessard advised that the meeting is a closed meeting to give everyone a voice that has expressed concern without the fear of being silenced and that said decision to hold a closed meeting followed the OKGOP Rules and practices. Chairman Lessard then asked if anyone had any proper business to bring to this Committee. No business was brought forward by those Committeeman in attendance. As such, a Motion to Adjourn the meeting at 7:12 p.m. was made by Alexander Johnson. Ben Rovenstine seconded the Motion. Motion was unanimously carried without objection. The meeting was adjourned at 7:13 p.m.

After the meeting the State GOP was contacted. The Minutes and Sign In Credentials are being forwarded to the State GOP.

No other official Washington County Special meeting took place on March 10. Any suggestion of a meeting does not comport with the definition of a Special Meeting as said meeting lacked Notice, a Quorum, and did not afford the Chairman or Vice Chairman of the County Committee an opportunity to preside.

### **The 15 Committeemen Contention.**

Issue No. 1 & 3: ***Vote on the Resolution proposed by the 15 County Committeemen to address the addition of delegates in any manner not stated in the Official WGGOP Convention Call. Submit Resolution adopted by the County Committee to the Washington County Chairman to be carried out as directed.***

It is the understanding of Chairman Lessard and Vice Chairman Johnson that 15 members of the 58 Member County Committee have untimely objected to the manner in which GOP registered members should be allowed to sign up for the County Convention. The methods of sign up were approved at the Precinct County Meeting by way of the decision to attend the convention as an "open" delegation.

All 461 delegates that have been credentialed, with the exception of the three delegates pending credentialing, either registered in person or their information was presented by way of info@washingtoncountyokgop.com. All were registered prior to 5:00 p.m. on February 24, 2023 as prescribed by Chairman Lessard at the Precinct Meeting held on February 20, 2023.

Moreover, the objections to format of registering the delegates was not raised until after February 24, 2023 deadline. The objection is not to the individuals registered

as delegates but rather the method by which delegates were registered. As such, the objection is out of order. Those objecting should have objected at the Precinct Meeting. It should be noted, that several County Committee Members objecting to the process utilized the same process to register Delegates via the [info@washingtoncountygop.com](mailto:info@washingtoncountygop.com). Any objection to the individuals being credentialed as Delegates belongs with the Credentialing Committee. Any future objections would be made at the County Convention if within proper order of the Convention Meeting.

Throughout this process Chairman Lessard and Vice Chairman Johnson have consulted with the State GOP Party Chair and Attorney. Chairman Lessard and Vice Chairman Johnson have also consulted with Past County Committee Chairs and others familiar with the process. There have been no violations of the Precinct Resolutions. This is precisely why the Credentialing process exists. The Credentialing Committee determines whether delegates submitted for consideration comport with the OKGOP Rules and Precinct Resolutions.

The second contention expressed by the "15" signatories requested that a Special Meeting be held to Appoint members to the Convention Rules, Platform, and Credentials Committees. Again, the appointment of members to the three committees occurred at the Precinct Meeting on February 24, 2023. Two Committees have met since the Precinct Meeting and have conducted business. Oddly enough, several of the "15" County Committee Members who have requested this action also serve on these committees and have attended meetings and voted in favor of resolutions passed.

The request made by the "15" signatories is out of order and is moot.

### **Removal of Lauren Murray as Secretary**

**On March 1<sup>st</sup>**, it was brought to the attention of the County Chairman Lessard and Vice Chairman Johnson that Ms. Murray was releasing delegate information to unauthorized parties from the [info@washingtoncountygop.com](mailto:info@washingtoncountygop.com) email address. When asked why Mrs. Murray would share this information it was determined that she had not been forthright to all who had received the information. Specifically, it was determined that the information was being shared with Wendi Stearman either directly or indirectly through other means. The sharing of information is not only concerning but a direct violation of OKGOP practices. To address this breach, the Chairman and Vice Chairman agreed that the best course of action was to reset the password and to restrict access to the account. Effective on the evening of March 1<sup>st</sup>, Mrs. Lauren Murray was removed as the County Committee Secretary and is no longer authorized to act on behalf of the WCGOP or conduct official business as the Secretary of the County Committee.

The Secretary and Treasurer positions are appointed positions by the County Committee Chairman. As such, those holding those positions can be removed by the Chairman.

On the morning of March 11, 2023, you received an email from Lauren Murray regarding a meeting that occurred on the evening before at Calvary Chapel. Said meeting was not a legally called meeting with proper notice, it did not have a quorum of eligible voting members, and it did not comport with OKGOP Rules. Moreover, the items discussed were out of Order and not properly brought before the County Committee. The State GOP has been notified of this meeting.

### **Moving Forward to the Washington County Convention**

It is the desire of Chairman Lessard and Vice Chairman Johnson to conduct the business of the party in a manner that demonstrates the decorum and civility that our brothers and sisters within the party deserve. We also note that we take our joint responsibility to "... promote the business and general welfare of the Republican Party..." seriously and believe that in doing so, we can disagree but can have a productive conversation to address concerns and maintain accountability. Further, we believe that all of this can be accomplished without creating division and a power struggle.

The Oklahoma Republican Party is much bigger than one committee or position and we owe it to the party and our neighbors to fight for our cause but never fight one another. The OKGOP and conservative ideals are attacked daily by society, the media, and those in the opposing party, if we do not unite against these forces, it will be our own undoing. Abraham Lincoln once said, "United we stand, divided we fall". We are at a pivotal point in our party's history, are we going to continue to fight one another, or are we going to link arms and present a united front? We are under no illusion that we will agree on everything but we need to keep the real "enemy" in mind and our vision in sight in order to push our party forward. Infighting will lead to our own destruction, not theirs.

We genuinely cannot fathom why anyone would want to disenfranchise over 300 delegates from being eligible to participate at the County Convention. We have racked our brains trying to figure out why the "15" County Committeemen believe these delegates are not credentialed. We have attempted to speak to each one of these 15 members to see if a resolution could be worked out without divisiveness. What became clear from many of these 15 committee members is that they are angry about Wendi Stearman's loss. Most of the 15 members were not concerned about delegates attending the County Convention but rather had other issues they wanted to be addressed within the party as a whole. Political races are hard. They often become heated and personal. Losing is never easy. But at the end of the day the majority of voters spoke, and we must collectively respect that vote and move on. So we respectfully request that these 15 Committeemen, and members of the NEOK Grassroots Facebook Group, reconsider their method of personal attacks, anger, and divisive rhetoric and rather work with us to defeat the real enemy, communistic-woke politicians who are determined to harm our children, take over our communities and ruin

our Country. We all worked together in 2020 we can work together again if we truly want to restore our Country to its greatness.

We look forward to seeing everyone at the County Convention who have been credentialed as delegates to attend. Your voice is important and your time is valuable. We thank all who are participants in the democratic purpose and sincerely hope that we can all come together. We worship together, we are neighbors, we are co-workers, we are friends, we are community members and we believe we have one absolute thing in common. We all love our Country.

We pray and will continue to work with those opposing the leadership at the County and State levels. We encourage all to get involved. And it looks like our call to participate is working! Thank you to everyone for making our State a wonderful place to live.

Respectfully,

Chairman Mike Lessard  
Vice-Chairman Alex Johnson