

Statement of Proponecy for the “Know Your State Before You Legislate” Act (SB: OBU-004)

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## **Overview**

Members of the Oklahoma Intercollegiate Legislature, I rise today to ask you to give your full consideration to Senate Bill OBU-004, the “Know Your State Before You Legislate” Act. This bill is more than a humorous concept or a novelty requirement it is a serious, practical step toward ensuring informed governance and strengthening trust between lawmakers and the people they serve.

Every session, we debate bills that shape the future of Oklahoma. Yet too often, legislators take office without a foundational understanding of the state’s history, geography, culture, and defining events. SB OBU-004 ensures that those elected to represent Oklahoma actually understand Oklahoma. That is not a punishment; it is a standard.

## **Why Lawmakers Need This Bill**

This bill addresses something that everyone in this chamber recognizes: Oklahoma deserves leaders who are familiar with the land, the people, and the shared history that shapes our policies. We should expect every legislator to understand the Tulsa Race Massacre, to know the locations of Stillwater and Norman, and to correctly pronounce “Washita.” These are not trivial facts; they are part of the identity of the state we are entrusted to serve.

When legislators enter office with little knowledge of Oklahoma’s basic history or geography, it not only weakens their credibility but also compromises the quality of their governance. Our constituents deserve representatives who speak with authority, not uncertainty, when addressing Oklahoma-specific issues.

This bill ensures that legislators-elect are prepared, not embarrassed, on their first day.

Delegate Lerma consistently brings thoughtful and meaningful legislation to this body, and SB OBU-004 is no exception. It elevates expectations, strengthens leadership, and makes sure Oklahoma lawmakers are Oklahoma-informed.

### **Pros: Why This Bill Works**

What makes this bill truly effective is that it is educational, transparent, and yes, a little fun. But beneath the humor lies real value.

1. It promotes informed governance.

Legislators cannot effectively legislate on Oklahoma issues if they don't understand the state's background, challenges, and culture.

2. It increases public trust.

Quiz results and statistics will be publicly available, proving to citizens that their lawmakers take their responsibilities seriously.

3. It sets a common baseline of knowledge.

From freshmen to seasoned lawmakers, everyone meets the same standard. This builds unity and credibility.

4. It costs the state virtually nothing.

Utilizing an existing digital platform ensures the process remains efficient and accessible.

5. It encourages community engagement.

Hosting the quiz live with optional public attendance creates transparency and encourages civic participation.

By requiring a simple 75% on a 20-question quiz, this bill doesn't aim to shame it aims to prepare. And if someone struggles, the bill includes constructive solutions, from a one-day Bootcamp to a supportive instructional program.

### **Concerns: What Critics Might Say**

Some critics may argue that this bill is unnecessary or that it trivializes the legislative process. But let's be clear: nothing about ensuring educated lawmakers is trivial. We already require financial disclosures, ethics training, and oath-taking. Requiring basic state knowledge is simply another step toward accountability.

Others may suggest this bill is too punitive. Yet the "penalties" are educational, not disciplinary. No legislator is barred from office. No one loses their seat. They simply gain the training they clearly need.

And let's be honest: if a legislator cannot pass a basic history and geography quiz about the state they wish to lead, the public deserves to know that, and the legislator deserves a structured opportunity to improve.

This bill uplifts lawmakers. It does not diminish them.

### **Conclusion**

Delegates, the "Know Your State Before You Legislate" Act is more than a clever idea it is good governance. It raises the bar for elected officials, enhances public accountability, and ensures lawmakers truly understand Oklahoma before shaping its future.

1. You cannot legislate effectively if you do not understand the people you represent.
2. You cannot lead a state you cannot locate on an unlabeled map.
3. You cannot honor Oklahoma's future if you do not know Oklahoma's past.

This bill must be heard.

This bill must be considered.

And for the sake of public trust, educational integrity, and legislative excellence this bill deserves your vote.