

Oklahoma's top 10 stories for each year since 2000, as selected by Associated Press-member newspapers and broadcasters.

## 2011

1. Oklahoma's strongest earthquake on record is centered near Sparks in Lincoln County. The magnitude 5.6 temblor, a magnitude 4.7 foreshock and a number of aftershocks also strike the region. No serious injuries were reported.

2. For the second time in a decade, an airplane crash kills members of the Oklahoma State University basketball programs. A women's coach and his assistant are killed, along with two school boosters, near Little Rock, Ark.

3. Gov. Mary Fallin has a largely successful year at the Legislature, with lawmakers passing changes in the civil justices and worker's compensation systems that she said were necessary to make the state more attractive to businesses.

4. Three years after two girls were found dead near Weleetka, a man is charged in their deaths. Kevin Sweat was already in custody on a charge filed in an unrelated killing.

5. Extreme weather grips the state, with record cold and blistering heat. Nowata hits -31, the state's lowest temperature ever, and the state in July sets a record for the highest monthly average temperature in the country. More than a dozen people die in tornadoes.

6. It takes two elections, but the Cherokee Nation eventually selects a new chief. Bill John Baker defeats incumbent Chad Smith after the tribe's Supreme Court orders a new election because five counts end with five different results.

7. More than 3,000 soldiers with the 45th Infantry Brigade are deployed to Afghanistan. Fourteen die, including the first female Oklahoma National Guard soldier to be killed during wartime.

8. The Chickasaw and Choctaw nations sue to stop the state and Oklahoma City from transporting new supplies of water from the tribes' historic territories in southeastern Oklahoma.

9. An Oklahoma City pharmacist is sentenced to life in prison for shooting a teenager during an attempted robbery. Prosecutors said he went too far when he grabbed a second gun and shot the boy five more times after he was already on the ground.

10. Civil rights activist Clara Luper dies. Luper led sit-in demonstrations that helped desegregate lunch counters at drug stores in Iowa, Kansas, Missouri and Oklahoma.

## 2010

1. Gov. Mary Fallin is elected as the state's first female governor. After the state primaries, Oklahoma was assured that a woman would lead the state. Lt. Gov. Jeri Askins won the Democratic nomination.

2. A recession contributes to a drop in tax revenues, prompting budget cuts across state agencies that averaged 7.5 percent. Some agencies, including the Corrections Department, furlough employees to save money.



Oklahoma earthquake

3. The state's second-largest tornado outbreak hits the state in May, spawning 55 tornadoes and killing three people. Forecasters started warning residents about the expected outbreak about a week in advance, perhaps saving lives. Hail storms and flooding leave millions of dollars in damage.

4. Voters reject a ballot issue that would have tied education funding to amounts spent in neighboring states. They did vote to make English the state's official language, to ban the use of Islamic law when deciding cases and against certain aspects of a new federal health care law.

5. A federal probe into corruption within the Tulsa Police Department brings indictments of eight current or former police officers. The investigation leads to 22 people being released from prison or having their charges dismissed.

6. Bribery counts are lodged against Rep. Randy Terrill and outgoing state Sen. Debbe Leftwich, alleging Terrill offered Leftwich a job at the state Medical Examiner's office if she would not seek re-election to her south Oklahoma City seat. Attorneys for both deny wrongdoing.

7. Tea party leaders and conservatives at the Legislature discuss creating a new volunteer militia to help defend against what they believe are improper federal infringements on state sovereignty.

8. The firing of the chief medical examiner by the board that oversees the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner begins a tumultuous year for the office.

9. The body of a girl missing since January is found in March in southeast Norman. Police say Aja Johnson's stepfather killed her mother, then her, then took his own life.

10. A nationwide shortage of a key execution drug forces a change in how Oklahoma puts condemned inmates to death.

## 2009

1. Even with massive budget cuts across state government, Oklahoma faces a \$530 million shortfall.

2. Tornadoes hit the state in February, killing eight at Lone Grove, and the mercury hits 115 in July in Freedom and Buffalo. A record-setting blizzard hits the state on Christmas Eve.

3. The first confirmed case of swine flu in Oklahoma is reported in Pontotoc County. By the end of the year, there are 40 deaths.

4. Gusty winds and tinder-dry grass and brush contribute to wildfires. Statewide, more than 160 homes are destroyed and 62 people are injured.

5. Ten people die when a tractor-trailer hit a line of cars that had stopped for an earlier accident on a turnpike near Miami.

6. An Oklahoma City pharmacist is charged with killing a would-be robber. A drugstore security camera showed that the pharmacist got another gun and shot the teenager after an earlier shot had already knocked him down.

7. Republicans hold both chambers of the Legislature for the first time. Even with a Democratic governor, the Legislature passes a number of GOP-backed bills.

8. Evangelist Oral Roberts dies. For years, the TV preacher became one of the nation's most recognized preachers.

9. Henry Bellmon, who in 1963 became the state's first Republican gov-

ernor, dies. He was known as the father of the state's modern Republican Party.

10. Death of former NBA player and Oklahoma basketball All-American Wayman Tisdale after a two-year battle with cancer. After his basketball career, Tisdale became a top jazz musician.

## 2008

1. Declining gasoline prices take a bite out of the Oklahoma economy, as does a slowing economy. Prices per gallon fell from \$3.80 to \$1.53 in a six-month period, contributing to an expected \$309 million shortfall in state revenues.

2. Republicans take both chambers of the state Legislature for the first time since statehood.

3. Skyla Jade Whitaker, 11, and Taylor Paschal-Placker, 13, are shot and killed while walking on a rural road near Weleetka. No arrest is made until 2011.

4. The Seattle SuperSonics announce they will move to Oklahoma City and be called the Thunder. The team enjoys high attendance despite opening with a 3-25 record.

5. One man dies and 300 are sickened after an E. coli outbreak traced to a restaurant in Locust Grove. The restaurant later changed from offering a buffet to "family style" dining.

6. Members of Oklahoma's 45th Infantry Brigade return after serving for more than a year in Iraq. Every soldier survived.

7. A tornado strikes Picher, a Superfund site, destroying about half the town. The federal government won't let anyone rebuild as it relocates people from the polluted area.

8. A federal jury convicts former state Auditor and Inspector Jeff McMahan and his wife on corruption charges.

9. A federal judge blocks enforcement of some provisions of a state law targeting illegal immigrants after the U.S. Chamber of Commerce questions penalties for failing to comply with an employee verification system.

10. SemGroup LP files for bankruptcy protection after losing \$2.4 billion in oil futures trading.

## 2007

1. A December ice storm kills 29. Power outages send many to shelters and close schools for several days. Grocery stores and restaurants have to close for a time because of food spoilage. Gov. Brad Henry cuts short a trip to Hawaii to deal with the disaster.

2. Oklahoma has its wettest summer on record. Some rains were welcome, but then they didn't stop. At one point, all 77 counties are in a state of emergency because of flooding. Remnants of Tropical Storm Erin settle over the state, killing six.

3. Legislators pass a bill to prevent undocumented immigrants from obtaining driver's licenses and public services. After many Latinos leave the state, some retailers and employers are left with labor shortages.

4. Oklahoma marks its centennial. Some Native American leaders opt not to celebrate, saying Oklahoma became a state as tribal territories were dismantled despite American guarantees for their future.

5. A January ice storm kills 32 in the eastern half of the state, and some rural electric customers are left without power for three weeks.

6. Richard Roberts leaves as president of Oral Roberts University after a lawsuit claims he misused school funds to support a lavish lifestyle.

7. Members of the members of the Oklahoma National Guard are dispatched to Iraq.

8. Oklahoma repairs or replaces 68 of its worst bridges using a one-time, \$100 million appropriation from the Legislature.

9. Indian casinos take off, as the state has a slot machine for every 79 residents \_ the third-highest number in the country.

10. Lauren Nelson of Lawton is crowned Miss

up amid a continuing drought. The wheat crop suffers, and state officials say federal aid is "only a Band-Aid on a major wound."

3. In a special session, legislators approve a \$620 million tax cut, lowering the state income tax rate and increasing sales tax exemptions and tax credits.

4. Oklahoma basketball coach Kelvin Sampson leaves for Indiana.

5. Surging energy prices and increased oil and gas production lead to a boost in Oklahoma's economy.

6. Legislators are forced to return to Oklahoma City to pass a budget after failing to settle on one during their regular session. House and Senate leaders come within 15 days of seeing a government shutdown.

7. Jennifer Berry of Tulsa is selected Miss America, the fifth woman from the state to do so.

8. Bridgestone-Firestone closes a Dayton Tire plant in Oklahoma City, where 1,400 people had worked. The company blames a preference for larger tires and competition from Asian imports.

9. Oil magnate T. Boone Pickens donates \$168 million to Oklahoma State, his alma mater.

10. Brad Henry picks up 66.5 percent of the vote to win re-election to the governor's office, defeating Rep. Ernest Istook by the largest margin in a half-century. Then-Lt. Gov. Mary Fallin wins Istook's seat in the 5th Congressional District.



Picher tornado

America, following Jennifer Berry of Tulsa, as Oklahoma becomes the first state to produce consecutive winners since Mississippi did so in 1959-60.

## 2006

1. Oklahoma suffers through an exceptional drought, which contributes to wildfires that destroy more than 1,320 square miles and 378 structures.

2. Ranchers sell off cattle as grazing land dries

5. Oklahoma opens Camp Gruber to 1,500 Katrina refugees turned away from Houston shelters that were already full.

6. A University of Oklahoma student is killed when a bomb he had made detonated outside the OU football stadium during a game. No one else is hurt.

7. Carrie Underwood of Checotah wins the American Idol competition.

8. The New Orleans Hornets of the NBA announce they will play 35 "home" games at Oklahoma City after Katrina wipes out much of the Crescent City.

## 2005

1. Oklahoma sells lottery tickets.  
2. Gas prices top \$3.00 for a time after Hurricane Katrina as the nation's refining capacity dropped, but prices fell to \$2 by year's end.

3. General Motors announces it will close a plant at Oklahoma City and lay off 2,200 workers. The plant had been rebuilt in 2003 after being hit by a tornado.

4. Oklahoma picks up 3,600 military and civilian jobs through a military restructuring that saw many installations in other parts of the country close.

5. Oklahoma opens Camp Gruber

9. The wife of an assistant warden is found in east Texas nearly 11 years after she disappeared with an inmate. Bobbi Parker says she was abducted and stayed with her kidnapper because she feared for her family's safety.

10. Guymon native Mike Brown leaves the Federal Emergency Management Agency after criticism over its Katrina response. President Bush tells him, "Brownie, you're doing a heck of a job."

## 2004

1. Oklahoma voters approve a state lottery, with proceeds going toward education.

2. Terry Nichols is tried for his role in the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing. After the trial, information is released showing that, in negotiations to avoid the death penalty, Nichols acknowledged a role in the Murrah Federal Building bombing.

3. Republicans win a majority in the Oklahoma House for the first time in 83 years. They win several seats that come open because of term

limits.

4. Quarterback Jason White wins the Heisman Trophy and the University of Oklahoma football team advances to the national championship game despite losing to Kansas State 35-7 in the Big 12 title game. (In January 2004, LSU beats Oklahoma for the national title.)

5. A suspect in a double-killing eludes police for 37-days until being wounded by an Arkansas doctor he allegedly kidnapped at gunpoint.

6. Sen. Don Nickles says he'll leave the U.S. Senate after four terms, saying he "didn't want to be a lifer."

7. Tornadoes hit Oklahoma City May 8-9, destroying 300 homes and killing one person.

8. Oklahoma's legislators ban smoking in most public places.

9. Legislators agree to let Oklahoma voters consider whether the state should have a lottery, with funds going to education.

10. Methamphetamine use and production troubles the state.

## 2002

1. An Interstate 40 bridge at Webbers Falls collapses, killing 14 people whose vehicles plunge into the Arkansas River after the span is hit by a towboat. The bridge was rebuilt in two months at a cost of \$13 million.

2. Brad Henry is elected governor over former football player Steve Largent, the favorite.

3. Oklahoma taps its Rainy Day Fund to avoid prison guard furloughs amid a state budget shortfall.

4. The state budget shortfall causes problems for Oklahoma public schools, who had less money to spend on teachers and programs.

5. An ice storm leaves 255,000 people without electricity across north-central Oklahoma. For one customer, power was out for 40 days.

6. Voters outlaw cockfighting, but supporters vow to go county-by-county to

fight back.

7. Oklahoma's Capitol gets a dome after an 18-month, \$21 million fundraising campaign.

8. Nine state questions and a three-way race for governor generates high voter turnout.

9. The men's and women's basketball teams each reach the Final Four.

10. Williams Communication Group Inc. files for bankruptcy but rebounds six months later with less debt, new management and a new name.

## 2001

1. Oklahoma City federal building bomber Timothy McVeigh is executed.

2. Ten people affiliated with the Oklahoma State University's men's basketball team, including two players, are killed in a private plane crash in eastern Colorado.

3. Questions about work performed by a former Oklahoma City police chemist threaten a number of cases she had worked on.

4. Voters approve a right-to-work law, which prohibits labor contracts that force employees to pay union dues.

5. Oklahoma executes 18 prisoners, more than any other state in the country. Three of those killed are women. State officials cite the recent clearance of a case backlog.

6. Conoco Oil and Phillips Petroleum merge and settle their headquar-



## Webbers Falls bridge collapse

limits.

4. Tom Coburn and Brad Carson spend \$10.6 million in their race to replace Don Nickles in the Senate. Coburn wins.

5. Insurance Commissioner Carroll Fisher resigns as the Senate considers his impeachment on charges of incompetence, neglect of duty and corruption. He was accused of illegally operating a charity and mishandling an education fund set up for insurance agents.

6. Voters approve giving Oklahoma some authority over Indian casinos, and also let horse tracks offer electronic games. Funds go to education.

7. Legislators pass a bill restricting sales of pseudoephedrine, an ingredient in methamphetamine. The number of meth lab seizures drops by nearly half.

8. Healthy Oklahomans are asked to forgo flu shots to make sure people who are more at-risk for illness have access to the vaccine.

9. Amid worries about binge drinking, the University of Oklahoma bans alcohol in fraternities and residence halls after a student dies.

10. Longtime politician Gene Stipe pleads guilty in a congressional campaign funding scandal.

## 2003

1. Seventeen soldiers from Fort Sill are among those killed in Iraq, including six who died when their Chinook helicopter is downed.

2. Politician Gene Stipe is accused in a congressional campaign scandal.

3. Revenue shortfalls lead Oklahoma to cut \$352 million from state

ters in Houston.

7. Ice storms cause a number of fatal traffic accidents and power outages.

8. The Oklahoma City National Memorial is dedicated, with President Bush in attendance.

9. Gov. Frank Keating's hopes of being named to Bush's cabinet die after it is revealed that he promoted a drug on behalf of a financier who in turn gave Keating's family money.

10. Terrorist attacks on the East Coast put the state on alert.

## 2000

1. The University of Oklahoma football team

rises to No. 1 in the national rankings. (In January 2001, Sooners beat Florida State for title.)

2. A severe drought strikes, contributing to wildfires in nearly every corner of the state.

Gov. Frank Keating imposes a statewide burn ban, including barbecues, and calls a day of prayer for rain.

3. The Oklahoma Department of Health goes through a shake-up amid complaints about nursing home care.

4. Oklahoma lowers the price for obtaining car tags.

5. Former Deputy Health Commissioner Brent VanMeter is convicted after being charged with bribery. State Health Board members say

VanMeter whitewashed deficiencies in nursing home oversight.

6. The steep increase in the price of gasoline and increases in the cost of natural gas.

7-tie. Administrators find a pair of "ghost employees" in state Health Department jobs who did little or no work.

7-tie. Dedication and opening of the Oklahoma City National Memorial.

9. Death of former House Speaker Carl Albert.

10. Keating considered as a possible vice presidential candidate or as a member of George Bush's cabinet.

