



OKLAHOMA STATE
SENATE
COMMUNICATIONS DIVISION • STATE CAPITOL
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73105

Immediate Release: December 15, 2015

Senators push for Bill of Rights monument

(For digital audio, go to www.oksenate.gov and select “Media”)

In an effort to raise awareness and educate Oklahomans about the importance of the first ten amendments to the U.S. Constitution, State Senators Patrick Anderson, R-Enid, and John Sparks, D-Norman, support building a Bill of Rights monument on the grounds of the state Capitol. The lawmakers held a press conference on Tuesday, which was Bill of Rights Day, to discuss the proposal. The effort is part of a nationwide push to create similar monuments in all 50 states.

“On December 15, 1791, the first ten amendments to the U.S. Constitution, known as the Bill of Rights, became the law of the land,” Anderson said. “These amendments guaranteed the basic rights of citizens, including freedom of speech, religion, assembly, the right to bear arms, and freedom of the press—rights that had been denied them when they were still under English rule. The Bill of Rights defines us as a nation. These are the freedoms countless American have fought and died to protect.”

Anderson and Sparks co-authored Senate Bill 14, which authorizes the placement of a Bill of Rights monument at the Capitol. The monument would be designed, constructed and installed with private donations.

“James Madison, who later became our fourth president, was the architect of the Bill of Rights. Supporters were adamant these freedoms should specifically be spelled out and not taken for granted,” Sparks said. “The rights of due process, protection from unreasonable search and seizure and the right to petition to the government are among the freedoms safeguarded by the Bill of Rights. I think this monument would help more people understand what these amendments represent and why they are so important to all Americans.”

The senators were joined at Tuesday’s press conference by Chris Bliss, Executive Director of MyBillofRights.org. Bliss said Arizona became the first state to create a Bill of Rights Monument in 2012. Texas has approved a full plaza design in front of the State Supreme Court building. He said Oklahoma and Alabama are set to consider authorizing legislation in 2016, and anticipates Maryland and Virginia will follow in 2017. Bliss said in addition to the educational aspect, the monument would have an economic benefit by helping draw even more tourists to the Capitol.

“We believe the passing along of America’s founding principles and freedoms from each generation to the next is a basic responsibility of citizenship. Monuments play a unique inspirational and educational role in this process by making history visible, tangible, and unforgettable, especially for younger people,” Bliss said. “This is why we’ve chosen to focus on State Capitols, because almost every school child visits their State Capitol at some point—tens of thousands annually in Oklahoma alone. Along with the major restoration and renovation project taking place at the Capitol, the new monument will be another important component adding to the Capitol’s value as a tourist attraction.”

For more information, contact Sen. Patrick Anderson at 405-521-5630

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