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## **Governor's State of the State Places Focuses on Economic Development**

OKLAHOMA CITY – Today, Oklahoma Governor Kevin Stitt delivered his annual State of the State address. Economic development, workforce and infrastructure played major roles in the speech and highlight the work being done at the Oklahoma Department of Commerce (Commerce) to support Gov. Stitt's agenda.

“As we continue to strive to become a Top 10 state, Governor Stitt has placed a strong focus on economic development,” said Scott Mueller, Oklahoma's Secretary of Commerce and Workforce Development. “He recognizes the essential role economic development plays in the health and future of our state. While we are seeing incredible success in our efforts to bring new jobs and investment to the state, along with strong growth by the companies doing business in Oklahoma today – thanks in large part to the business-friendly policies we have in place and our business-focused state leadership – we also recognize we must continue to invest in areas like workforce and infrastructure to ensure that we build upon our momentum.”

In his speech, Gov. Stitt mentioned the state's low unemployment rate and increase in workforce participation rates. While these are positive trends, it also creates challenges for Oklahoma companies looking to expand.

“Since April 2020, Oklahoma saw a net increase of 27,000 new residents. Our open-for-business policies and welcoming nature resonate with people looking for more freedoms in their businesses and lives,” said Brent Kisling, Commerce Executive Director. “A significant part of our success comes from the resiliency of our legacy Oklahoma companies who have found ways to continue operations and keep our citizens employed. Now is the time to tell our story and welcome even more new residents who want to experience freedom and prosperity.”

With its focus on industry-specific business recruitment, Commerce will build on the successes of 2021 and hopes to see more companies like electric vehicle manufacturer, Canoo, announce historic investments in the state.

“Companies are very interested in what our state offers,” said Jennifer Springer, Commerce Director of Business Development. “They not only recognize our pro-business policies, but also see that we are a state willing to remove business barriers. Last year Gov. Stitt took a proactive approach to the global supply chain issues with the launch of the Supply Chain Oklahoma initiative. By working alongside the Oklahoma Manufacturing Alliance, we launched Connex, an innovative supply chain platform, that connects Oklahoma companies to the supplies they need. To date, more than 400 Oklahoma companies are utilizing this platform.”

Another focus of Commerce is addressing infrastructure in communities large and small. Earlier this month, Commerce announced that 28 communities had been awarded grant funds to assess how sites and communities can maximize economic impact.

“Companies want to move to Oklahoma,” said Kisling. “It’s our job to make sure there are sites and workers available. To make that happen, we have to increase our focus on infrastructure – from helping communities develop sites that can support businesses to ensuring there is housing and desirable quality of life opportunities for individuals and families.”

“On behalf of our entire team at the Department of Commerce, I am excited to face the challenges of 2022 head-on and applaud the leadership being provided by Gov. Stitt to help us strengthen our state’s economy and increase opportunities for our fellow Oklahomans,” said Mueller.

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