



J. Kevin Stitt  
Office of the Governor  
State of Oklahoma

## One Oklahoma

The people of this State are proud to be Oklahomans. We embrace our unique history, heritage, and diversity. We believe in freedom, justice for all, the rule of law, public safety, fair play, and a democratic system of government. These beliefs form the foundation of the State's healthy, effective, and unique relationship with the sovereign tribal nations present within its boundaries. This strong, if sometimes delicate, relationship has resulted in well-funded and flourishing tribal nations, benefitting tribal members and non-tribal members alike. Each tribe maintains its unique culture, celebrates its rich heritage, operates its tribal government, and provides enhanced services for its members while remaining an essential partner to the State of Oklahoma. Put simply, for 113 years we have labored together to create a better future for all citizens; we work together, play together, live together, and worship together, regardless of race, gender, or tribal affiliation.

### A Unique Historical Journey

Oklahoma's journey to statehood can only be told by including the histories that brought the "Five Civilized Tribes" to this land. Without it, the statehood movement would have lacked definition and political momentum, and Oklahoma's constitutional convention would have been without leadership.

The history of Native Americans and their tribes does not sit *alongside* the history of Oklahoma; tribal history *is* Oklahoma history. This fact was well known at statehood and has been ever since. Oklahoma is an ongoing triumph of pluralism, its citizens and their respective origins joined by deliberate design, with an expectation that forevermore they would be one.

This high-minded notion was conceived after hard experience with formal separation of tribes and settlers, where reservations administered by the federal government, "an indifferent guardian a thousand miles away," were inadequate for all. Today, the reality of life on large reservations in other states is clearly undesirable and features just the sort of conflict and separation Oklahoma was designed to avoid. In those states, Native Americans live in segregated areas and are often separated from the rest of society.

Oklahoma's founding fathers knew that only by fully integrating all Oklahomans—Native American and non-Native American alike—into their new state and its government would the word "sovereignty" have meaning. The people of Oklahoma would be sovereign, and they would act through a government they directed. This framework would produce Oklahoma solutions for Oklahoma problems.

### **A New Crossroads**

More than a century after statehood, we are once again at a great crossroads, due to decisions made "a thousand miles away." At stake is whether we will continue to be One Oklahoma, or whether we will take steps backward, toward two parallel societies, each subject to different rules and each denied the opportunity to achieve a whole greater than the sum of the parts.

This issue is not academic; it is foundational. Clear jurisdiction of governance within geographic boundaries controls everything, including, but not limited to, the civil and criminal courts, taxation, regulation, property ownership, and the provision of all public services, including education, transportation and infrastructure, public safety, environmental protection, health, and human services.

This governance is the responsibility of Oklahoma's commonly elected officials, and should apply consistently to all residents of Oklahoma, regardless of race, gender, or affiliation, to ensure that each has equal protection under the law, to ensure that each is governed by leaders of their own choosing, and to ensure that the burden of providing common services is shared in an equitable manner.

### **Principles That Respect All**

The principles below are intended to ensure that we remain One Oklahoma, honoring the sovereignty of our tribes to retain great companies and businesses, attract extraordinary talent, and nurture small businesses in every corner of the State. By striving together as One Oklahoma our success will ensure that our children and grandchildren will make Oklahoma their home.

1. All Oklahomans should be treated equally under the law, and fairly represented by their commonly elected State officials.
2. All Oklahomans should share, as provided under Oklahoma law and without regard to race, gender, or affiliation, in the funding of the common services provided by the State to its residents, including, but not limited to:
  - a. Transportation and infrastructure,
  - b. Education,
  - c. Public Safety and Corrections (law enforcement, firefighters, paramedics, and others),
  - d. Criminal and Civil Courts,

- e. Environmental Protection,
- f. Health and Human Services (such as Child Welfare),
- g. Worker's Compensation and Unemployment Administration, and
- h. Economic Development.

The burden of current and historic taxes, fees, and other levies established by the commonly elected officials of Oklahoma should be placed on all Oklahoma residents irrespective of race, gender, or affiliation in order to avoid the unequal and inequitable distribution of the costs associated with the common services provided to those residents by the State.

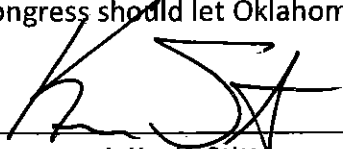
3. Laws, regulations, and government services as established by our commonly elected officials should apply consistently to all residents of Oklahoma regardless of race, gender, or affiliation. To ensure that each resident obtains equal protection under the law, and access to essential common services:
  - a. The same laws, regulations, policies, and means of enforcement should apply to all Oklahoma residents, except as to Trust-owned land.
  - b. Courts and jails should not be segregated according to race or affiliation.
  - c. Schools should not be segregated according to race or affiliation.
  - d. Health care and human services should not be segregated according to race or affiliation.
4. Oklahoma must provide a level playing field for all businesses to compete and flourish, regardless of where, within the boundaries of the State of Oklahoma, they are located. Only then will we attract and retain businesses in our great state.
  - a. Zoning, land use regulations, construction codes, and permits should be consistent for all people, businesses, and activities within established local jurisdictional limits and within unincorporated areas that are governed by Oklahoma law.
  - b. Except as to Trust-owned lands, mineral rights regulation and environmental regulation should remain the responsibility of the State to ensure these programs are administered and enforced consistently for all Oklahoma residents and businesses.
5. Sovereignty – The State of Oklahoma supports, values, and embraces the culture and uniqueness of each of the tribes that reside within Oklahoma, and supports the sovereignty of these tribes in a way that is consistent with these principles.

**One Oklahoma – One People**

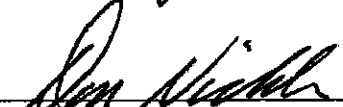
Native Americans *are* Oklahoma society as much as anyone else. To maintain this central feature of Oklahoma life is not to divide Oklahomans into separate groups, but to empower all enfranchised citizens, to participate in the governance of our state. This is the way we have operated since we became a state. It would be tragic to degrade such a monumental achievement.


Being One People in One Oklahoma has made us truly special and unique. Nowhere else in the United States do Native Americans participate so fully in every aspect of civil society that the absence of a Native American in public and private discourse is more notable than the presence of one.


Congress should let Oklahoma return to being One People.

  
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Governor J. Kevin Stitt  
October 22, 2020

  
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Larry Nichols, Chairman

  
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Doris Nickles, former U.S. Senator

  
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J.C. Watts, former U.S. Congressman

  
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Julie Daniels, State Senator

  
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Mark Lepak, State Representative

  
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Alan Armstrong, Commissioner

  
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Brent Bolen, Commissioner

  
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Suzie Brewster, Commissioner

  
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Harold Hamm, Commissioner

  
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Joe Robson, Commissioner