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## Oklahoma Policy Institute

### 2017 POLICY PRIORITY: MAKE THE BUDGET MORE TRANSPARENT

#### Background

Each year, the single most important piece of legislation adopted by the Legislature is the General Appropriations (GA) bill. The GA bill typically runs to almost 100 pages and appropriates nearly \$7 billion to dozens state agencies from more than three dozen revenue sources.

Despite its importance and complexity, the GA bill is typically decided behind closed doors by a small group very late in session and then rushed through the Legislature with little time for scrutiny and debate. Last year, the GA bill was not introduced until late Tuesday morning of the final week of session.

This rushed process denies legislators, the media, and the public time to study the budget and raise questions about important funding decisions. As a result, controversial provisions in the budget bill frequently come to light only after the bill has passed – such as the decisions last year to increase the Legislature’s budget by \$4 million or to cut the Department of Education’s program and activities budget by 30 percent.



#### The Solution

The state budget is too important to be rushed through the Legislature with so little time for scrutiny and debate. Legislation should be adopted that would prohibit any bill that includes the appropriation of state dollars from being brought up for a final vote in either Chamber less than one week (five legislative days) after the final version of the bill has been filed.

#### What You Should Do

**Tell your House member and Senator that you want a more transparent budget. Urge them to reject any budget bill that has not been introduced at least a week before it comes to a vote and to pass legislation that requires more transparency in the budget process.**

You can look up your Senator and Representative at <http://okpolicy.org/find-your-legislator/>, call the House switchboard at 405-521-2711, and call the Senate switchboard at 405-524-0126.