

THE LEFLORE COUNTY LEADER

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APPROVED AND PAID: STATE REP. RICK WEST, REPUBLICAN, HEAVENER



The Difference Maker

Why Rick West is one of only three legislators with zero lobbyist gifts.

State Representative Rick West has joined the rare group of lawmakers who've done what many at the Capitol consider unthinkable: he's refused to take gifts or contributions from lobbyists—completely.

In 2025, while most legislators waded through the steady stream of catered meals, corporate outings, and surprise “deliveries,” West was one of just three who steered clear of it all.

“When I came to the Capitol, I didn't come to play games with lobbyists,” West said. “I came to fight for the folks back home. That means drawing a line and sticking to it. I don't take their gifts, and I don't take their money.”

“Serving in the Legislature is a trust. And out in rural Oklahoma, trust is still worth more than a steak dinner.”

— Rep. Rick West

And draw the line he has. Unlike many of his colleagues, West makes it plain: he doesn't carry bills for agencies or lobbyists. Every measure he sponsors comes directly from constituents. It's a simple rule, but in a building where corporate favors flow freely, it sets him apart.

West says the culture of gift-giving runs deeper than most Oklahomans realize.

“It's not just free food or little trinkets,” he said. “It's a system designed to get lawmakers comfortable with doing favors for people who want something out of government. That's how government keeps getting bigger.”

Lobbyists routinely drop off items at front desks, sponsor group dinners, and host entertainment-filled evenings where access buys influence.

“Once a lawmaker starts going along with that, their priorities shift,” West explained. “The pull of those friendships and favors can easily drown out the voices of the people back home — the farmers, ranchers, and working folks who don't have time or money to wine and dine a politician.”

Though still a rare breed, West represents a small but growing number of legislators determined to shut down the Capitol's gift culture once and for all.

“Serving in the Legislature is a trust,” he said. “And trust isn't built with steaks, sports tickets, or lobbyist perks. It's built by standing firm for the people who sent you here — the same way a handshake still means something out in rural Oklahoma.”

Standing Firm for Rural Oklahoma and LeFlore County Values

Rep. Rick West provides an update on the battles he has fought to protect our rights, our pocketbook, and our way of life.



To the people of LeFlore County.

Attached you will find my report to you about my work for you during the past year. Your viewpoint is what matters to me. I didn't go to Oklahoma City to make friends with lobbyists or to carry water for state agencies. I went to fight for you — the folks who work the land, raise their families, and want nothing more than to be left alone by big government and big corporations.

Like you, I've seen too many politicians lose their way once they get to Oklahoma City. They start out talking about principles, but before long they're taking gifts, listening to the lobbyists, and carrying bills that serve special interests instead of the people. That is not who I am, and it is not the path I will ever take.

I don't accept gifts from lobbyists or political contributions, and I never will. I don't live the Oklahoma City nightlife that entraps and compromises so many elected officials who have lost their way. That's why, when I file a bill, it's because a constituent asked me to — not because an agency handed it to me, and not because a lobbyist promised to fund my campaign.

This past year, I've been in some tough fights:

I pushed back when the Corporation Commission tried to saddle Oklahomans with more rate hikes while one of their own commissioners was caught drunk, behaving inappropriately with someone from a regulated industry — “purportedly,” as they put it — casting doubt on his judgment.

I fought attempts by big agriculture product producers to dodge liability for their actions, because if they make a mess out of the health of our farmers and our land, they ought to be the ones to clean it up.

I stood up against the Wildlife Department when they wanted hunters to “check in” on state-owned land — land that already belongs to the people of Oklahoma. They backed down.

I've taken on those pushing lab-made fake meat that threatens our farmers and ranchers, because I know where real food comes from: the land God gave us and the honest work of Oklahomans.

I am a rural legislator, and I know rural Oklahoma. That's why my focus is protecting our way of life — our land, our food, our freedom — from those who would rather see it turned over to bureaucrats, corporate boards from out of state, or other distant special interests.

And while fighting against government expansion, restrictions on the rights of the people, and utility and fee hikes has been important, I have also continued to advocate for proposals brought to me directly by the district. This includes gaining committee approval to require that police officers be U.S. citizens, securing the Governor's approval to clarify that state employees who don't need insurance — and don't want to waste taxpayer dollars — have the right to opt out, and winning House approval for prohibiting government entities from destroying historic firearms when those firearms could instead be donated and preserved.

I'll continue to stand strong for you and for the values that built this state. My loyalty is not for sale. It remains right here at home, with you: the people I represent.

So whenever you have an idea, or a need for someone in state government to step up for our values and our way of life, know this: I will take your call, and we will work together to do what needs to be done.

Sincerely, your representative,

A handwritten signature in cursive that reads "Rick West".

OPPOSING LAB GROWN MEAT:

“Once they legitimize it, you can bet they’ll subsidize it. That’s how rural Oklahoma gets left behind.”

— Rep. Rick West

The Oklahoma State Capital

The Man From the Real World in the Oklahoma House of Representatives

In the darkest days of the Oklahoma House, Rick West reminded the state that real representatives of the people still exist.

It was the end of the 2018 session. It was the close of the most traumatic term of the legislature since Republicans took control in 2004.

Watching all those “Republican” politicians, time and again, betray their employers in vote after vote — and realizing that the trauma of betraying the people would forever change them, turning them into political animals with almost no chance of redemption — was heart-breaking. It was like watching a car crash in slow motion. The only natural response was the urge to escape, to get back to the normal world. As the final vote of the session was taken, that was my goal: to get off the House floor and back into the real world as quickly as possible.

It was my last session. My work was mostly done. Only one challenge remained: making a successful extraction from enemy territory; the land of the political. As I navigated past the grandstanding array of self-indulgent politicians congratulating themselves on the close of the session, I was nearly free. Then, just as I approached the massive doors at the northeast entrance of the chamber, one person stopped me. To my relief, it was one of the very few in that room who was still from the real world. With a big grin and a firm handshake, he offered kind words in the warm, rural inflection that could only come from someone with the deepest roots in the truest example of the real world: rural Oklahoma.

After a long twelve years, fighting for a cause in which I deeply believed, filled with thousands of previous interactions, this was the perfect ending: a welcome reminder that even in the darkest environments — including the corrupt world of the Capitol — real, honest people still endure, unshaken by pride, power, or money, not unlike the remnant described in 1 Kings 19:18.

The person bestowing this silver lining was LeFlore County’s state representative, Rick West.

In the years since — some of the darkest in the recent history of the House of Representatives — West has joined fellow Rep. Tom Gann in keeping the light on in that dark place.

Both have completely abstained from all lobbyist money — not just

the hundreds spent on dinners and events, but the many thousands in contributions routinely provided to incumbents.

Together they’ve set the example for others to follow: unafraid to vote “no” on bad legislation, leading the House in no votes, and topping grassroots indexes that measure who most closely represents conservative policy and thought. From The Oklahoma Constitution’s Conservative Index, to the Oklahoma Republican Platform Scorecard, to the upcoming State Capital People’s Audit, West and Gann have consistently proven to be among the best in the legislature at resisting the power of the money crowd and staying true to the values most politicians claim to support but often betray.

West has honed the knack for taking a stand while keeping that friendly, grounded Oklahoma presence. He isn’t a “politician.” You won’t catch him issuing grandstanding press releases, hogging the microphone in debate, or trying to dominate a meeting. Instead, those around him observe that he waits until just the right time — then weighs in with the plainspoken perspective of someone shaped outside the Capitol, among the people of rural Oklahoma.

That’s worked to his advantage. This year, drawing on his agricultural background, West took the lead in opposing lab-grown meat policies and in fighting a proposal many feared would allow a German international agricultural corporation to waive liability for potential harm to Oklahomans’ health — a measure no doubt pushed by powerful, politician-financing lobbyists. On the latter, West’s opposition in committee may have been the decisive factor in stopping the bill. Though the committee advanced it, after West’s opposition, the sponsor clearly panicked, issuing a weekend press release announcing he was abandoning the measure. Getting a legislator to work in the middle of his three-day weekend — that’s no small feat.

In short, because West isn’t a politician, those in the know in the House will know this: when Rick West engages in debate, they should listen.

In 2018, West gave up his office, went back home to rural Oklahoma and likely never intended to return to the capitol. But in 2020, he



knew he had to step up and do what was right for the people: West put the first crack in the dam of House Speaker Charles McCall’s political machine — the very machine that had done so much to damage the dignity of the Oklahoma House and commanded unimaginable financial resources. By defeating McCall’s candidate, West proved that McCall’s structure wasn’t indestructible. By 2024, the crack had widened into a breach: the floodwaters broke through when McCall couldn’t even save his powerful, pork-dispensing Appropriations chairman, and multiple incumbents tied to the machine went down in defeat.

What began with Rick West’s courage now risks completely destroying the remnants of the McCall and the dark money machines. The momentum continues to spread across Oklahoma as a new generation of candidates steps up to run for the House on the “no-lobbyist-money” platform pioneered by West and Gann.

Those of us who work to preserve the history of the legislature in the 21st century will always point to their actions as a turning point — the moment that made it possible to return the House of Representatives to a true parliamentary body, capable once again of deliberation and of reflecting the people’s values.

The entire state owes a lasting debt of gratitude to the people of LeFlore County, who on that fateful day in the 2020 election — and in the years since — resisted the pressure of the political machine and played a central role in making the good things to come possible. They may never fully realize the extent to which they changed the course of history when they elected a true representative of the people, Rick West.

As a cattleman from LeFlore County, Representative Rick West knows firsthand the value of Oklahoma’s farmers and ranchers — and the dangers posed by efforts to legitimize lab-grown “meat.” That’s why West has been one of the Legislature’s strongest voices opposing proposals to normalize or expand this experimental product.

“I know where real food comes from,” West said. “It comes from the land, and the animals we raise with care and hard work. It doesn’t come from a lab. I will not stand by while powerful interests try to push fake meat on our people and undermine the men and women who actually feed this state.”

Supporters of lab-grown products frame them as innovation. But West sees the danger: legitimizing lab-grown meat would open the door to government incentives, corporate takeovers of the food system, and a gradual erosion of the markets that Oklahoma’s ranchers rely on.

“This isn’t about innovation,” West said during debate. “It’s about replacing our ranchers with a factory. It’s about putting our food supply in the hands of labs and corporations instead of families and communities.”

Once they get their foot in the door, they’ll demand subsidies, rewrite regulations, and before long rural Oklahoma is left out in the cold.”

West argues that accepting lab-grown meat as equal to traditional beef would damage both consumers and producers.

“The people of Oklahoma deserve food that is natural, healthy, and

This article is reprinted with permission from *The Oklahoma State Capital*. In it, former Government Modernization Chairman Jason Murphey reflects on the vital role State Representative Rick West has played in representing the people of Oklahoma.

WEST WINS THE BATTLE AS HE OPPOSES DANGEROUS BILL TO SHIELD CHEMICAL COMPANIES

West's opposition to HB 1755 showed his willingness to stand against corporate power — and proved that courage can change outcomes.

When House Bill 1755 came before the Legislature this spring, most Oklahomans hadn't heard of it. But behind the scenes, one of the biggest chemical companies in the world was set to benefit. The bill would have given pesticide giants like Bayer and ChemChina sweeping immunity from lawsuits from Oklahoma farmers.

"Sometimes you lose the vote but win the day."

— Rep. Rick West

Representative Rick West knew exactly what was at stake. A cattleman from LeFlore County, West has long been wary of corporate attempts to tilt the law in their favor at the expense of ordinary Oklahomans. "This bill wasn't about protecting farmers," West said. "It was about protecting Bayer and Monsanto. And that's not who we're here to serve."

HB 1755 mirrored legislation that had already failed in other states like Idaho, Iowa, Missouri, Mississippi, and Wyoming. It relied on the argument that as long as the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) had approved a label, manufacturers had met their duty to warn the public.

But critics pointed out that the



Agriculture Committee Vice-Chairman Rick West is pictured here questioning the sponsor of the plan to extend protections to the multi-national chemical company, Bayer.

EPA relies heavily on industry-supplied data and often goes decades without updating reviews. "The EPA is not the last word on safety," West explained. "If new evidence comes forward, Oklahomans deserve the right to hold corporations accountable."

Despite West's strong opposition, the bill passed out of committee by a vote of 7-2, with West firmly in the minority but his opposition to the bill drew attention from grassroots groups and everyday citizens who feared the bill would create what one advocate called a "Wild West of chemicals" in Oklahoma.

Then came a surprising turn. Just days after the committee vote, the bill's own author announced he was

abandoning HB 1755 and sent out a press release declaring he was finished with it. What looked like a setback at first had, in fact, become a victory.

West says the lesson is clear: "Sometimes you can lose the vote but win the day. When Oklahomans stand up and speak out, even the biggest corporations and the lobbyist-funded politicians who carry water for them can be stopped."

For West, the fight against HB 1755 was never just about one bill. It was about ensuring that Oklahoma families, farmers, and consumers are protected from the overreach of billion-dollar companies. And in this case, thanks to his courage and persistence, they were.

WEST SUPPORTS SAVE OKLAHOMA

State Representative Rick West is backing the *Save Oklahoma Plan*, a grassroots effort to defend land, communities, and freedoms from government and corporate overreach.

The plan, available at SaveOklahomaPlan.com lays out reforms to protect rural families, food and water safety, and Oklahoma's sovereignty.

The plan opposes taxpayer-funded "green energy" subsidies, blocks the spreading of toxic sludge on farmland, and criminalizes hostile foreign ownership of Oklahoma land.

It also calls for mandatory E-Verify, ending perpetual toll roads, and banning discrimination based on vaccination status.

The plan also seeks to end the practice of taxpayer-funded lobbyists.

"This is about sovereignty, security, and protecting Oklahoma's future," West said. "Taxpayer money should never be used to pay lobbyists who work against the very people footing the bill. This plan puts Oklahomans first, and I'm proud to stand with it."

WEST FIGHTS WILDLIFE OVERREACH — HUNTERS WIN BACK THEIR RIGHTS

Rep. Rick West fought an overreach that would have burdened Oklahoma hunters with needless red tape — and he won.

When the Legislature passed SB 448 earlier this year, the intent was clear: non-residents who wanted to hunt on Oklahoma's Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) would need to seek permission, pay fees, and check in. The law was never meant to apply to Oklahoma residents.

But after the session ended, the Oklahoma Wildlife Commission took matters into its own hands.

Acting without legislative authority, the Commission pushed through an emergency rule that forced all hunters — including Oklahomans on their own public lands — to "check in" every single time they went afield.

Representative Rick West immediately cried foul. "Nowhere in SB 448 does it give Wildlife the authority to have this rule," West explained. "This is how agencies can go around the Legislature to get what they want."

West pointed out that SB 448 had been a Senate request from Wildlife, carried in the House by Rep. Jim Grego, but the measure itself never once referenced in-state hunters. "The bill dealt only with nonresi-

dents hunting on WMAs," West said.

"Wildlife saw this as an opportunity to change the rules on Oklahoma hunters and then blame it on legislators."

He didn't stop at making statements — West went to work activating the grassroots.

"We have to stand up for hunters and for the rights of Oklahomans to enjoy their land without unnecessary government intrusion."

- RICK WEST

ing the grassroots.

Using his Facebook page, he began posting detailed updates and urging Oklahomans to take action.

He shared phone numbers for Wildlife commissioners and encouraged hunters to call the Governor's office and press for the rule to be stopped.

"This is a rule, not a bill," West explained, making clear that the Com-



House District 3 State Representative Rick West Takes the Oath of Office

mission had overstepped its authority and tried to slip through a policy change after lawmakers had adjourned.

The response was swift. Hunters across the state started calling, and legislators began weighing in too.

West kept the updates coming, explaining each step of the process and rallying support to stop the overreach.

The pushback worked.

Facing strong opposition from West, fellow lawmakers, and a growing chorus of Oklahomans, the Wildlife Commission backed down.

Today, Oklahoma hunters can continue to hunt on public land without the burden of checking in each time — just as the Legislature originally intended.

For West, the fight was about more than just hunting regulations. It was about defending the authority of the

Legislature and protecting the rights of everyday Oklahomans against agency overreach.

"Agencies should not be making rules that go beyond what the law allows," he said.

"We have to stand up for hunters and for the rights of Oklahomans to enjoy their land without unnecessary government intrusion."

West also noted that this battle showed the importance of grassroots involvement.

"When people speak up, it makes a difference," he said.

"That's why I do my best to keep everyone informed."

He urged constituents to follow his Facebook page so they can stay up to date and be ready to act the next time a state agency tries to sneak something through.

The QR code to Rick's Facebook page can be found on the next page.

West Pushes for Transparency in Corporation Commission Proceedings

As allegations of misconduct surface, Rep. Rick West presses for transparency and accountability at the Corporation Commission while fighting to protect ratepayers.

Local voters already know State Representative Rick West as a steady, principled defender of Oklahoma values, a watchdog for rural families, and one of the Legislature's strongest opponents of unchecked government power and special-interest giveaways at the Capitol.

Because West doesn't take lobbyist gifts or contributions, he isn't beholden to the insiders who try to run the place. That independence comes with a consequence: when you're one of the few not tied into the money or the Capitol game, you end up being one of the only voices willing to speak out when it matters most.

That's exactly what happened last year when troubling allegations surfaced involving one of Oklahoma's Corporation Commissioners. The commissioner reportedly became intoxicated at an out-of-state event and allegedly engaged in inappropriate physical behavior—behavior witnessed by someone tied to a company regulated by the Commission.

For West, that raised a serious red flag. When a regulator behaves inappropriately in front of the very companies they oversee, it calls into question whether future rate hike requests or regulatory decisions can truly be impartial. "Utility customers are captive," West explained. "They can't just walk away when rates keep going up. That's why it's critical for regulators to operate above reproach."

West believes this is part of a bigger problem at the Corporation Commission. He has consistently opposed its pattern of rate hikes, including a massive bond fee that will weigh down utility bills for years to come. Even more concerning, the Commission has pushed to exempt itself from Oklahoma's Open Meetings Act—a move West fiercely opposes because it would allow the Commission to operate in secret while billions of dollars hang in the balance.

As these allegations of misconduct surfaced, most lawmakers remained quiet. West did not. Alongside Representatives Tom Gann and Kevin West, he filed a petition with the Oklahoma Supreme Court, urging justices to examine the conflict of interest and intervene if necessary. In doing so, they directly challenged some of the most powerful utility interests in the state.

That legal effort came as Public Service Company of Oklahoma (PSO) was pushing to raise res-

The screenshot shows the Oklahoma Voice website interface. At the top, it says "HEADLINES" in large red letters. Below that is the "Oklahoma Voice" logo with the tagline "PART OF STATES NEWSROOM". The main headline reads "Oklahoma lawmakers appeal Corporation Commission's approval of OG&E rate increase" with a photo of two men in suits. Below this is another headline: "Three lawmakers file appeal to overturn OG&E's \$127 million rate increase". Further down, there's a section for "Public Radio" with a "Donate" button and a headline: "Lawmakers ask Oklahoma Supreme Court to bar Hiett from voting on cases". The article is by Barbara Hoberock for Oklahoma Voice, published on September 17, 2024. A photo shows Oklahoma Corporation Commissioner Todd Hiett at a meeting.

idential rates by an average of \$12 a month. By taking the fight to the Supreme Court, West and his allies injected much-needed sunlight into the process, giving ratepayers a fighting chance against what otherwise would have been yet another rubber-stamped increase.

Although the case is still unfolding, it has already forced greater scrutiny and accountability on an agency that too often operates in the shadows. "This is about fairness, transparency, and protecting Oklahomans from runaway utility costs," West said.

Aside from coverage in *OKEnergyToday.com*, most major media outlets have ignored the story.

But with billions of dollars on the line, West's effort may prove to be one of the most important—and least reported—policy battles in Oklahoma.

While most Oklahomans may never see the full extent of these behind-the-scenes battles, they can rest assured knowing West is standing guard—quietly but firmly—on behalf of taxpayers, ratepayers, and the people he represents.

VOTING THE RIGHT WAY: RICK WEST SCORES 93% ON OKLAHOMA'S LEADING CONSERVATIVE SCORE CARD

Back in 1979, the publishers of The Oklahoma Constitution newspaper had seen enough. Too many politicians were pulling a bait-and-switch—campaigning as conservatives, then turning around and voting like liberals once they got to the Capitol.

So they created the Conservative Index—a no-nonsense, nonpartisan scorecard that cuts through the spin and tells the truth about how our legislators really vote. Not what they say on the campaign trail, but what they actually do when it counts.

For more than four decades, the Index has been the watchdog tool for everyday Oklahomans—calling out politicians who talk conservative back home, then sell out our values in Oklahoma City. Year after year, it has earned its reputation as the gold standard for tracking who's really standing up for conservative principles—and who's just playing politics.

This year, State Representative Rick West earned one of the very highest scores in the entire Legislature: 93%. The only reason it wasn't a perfect 100% was because West missed a single vote—an absence due to attending his grandson's graduation. "I wasn't going to miss that milestone in my family's life," West said, "but my record shows where I stand." And indeed it does: West's lifetime Conservative Index average stands at 97%—one of the most consistently conservative records in the entire Oklahoma House.

So what earned West his top-tier rating this year? The Conservative Index rated legislators on 10 key votes ranging from cutting taxes to defending family values. West voted the conservative position on all nine votes he cast.

He supported cutting the state income tax and placing Oklahoma on a path toward eliminating the income tax altogether—putting money back in the pockets of hardworking Oklahomans. He backed reforms to the initiative petition process to ensure out-of-state groups couldn't hijack Oklahoma's laws with big money and urban-only campaigns, protecting the voice of rural citizens.

When it came to property rights and the Second Amendment, West stood firm, voting to strengthen protections for homeowners and business owners to lawfully display a firearm in defense of their property. He also opposed the push to expand corporate film subsidies that would have funneled more taxpayer money into Hollywood-style productions—standing against special-interest giveaways.

West voted to end DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) mandates in higher education, encouraging Oklahoma colleges to focus on academic excellence rather than ideological agendas. He also supported banning adult-oriented performances in front of minors, defending children from obscene content on public property.

On family issues, West supported protecting the rights of adoptive and foster parents from being forced to affirm gender ideology against their religious or moral beliefs. He voted to prohibit government from shutting down businesses during a pandemic without scientific proof of danger, protecting small-town economies from arbitrary closures.

And when it came to roads and trucking, West supported requiring commercial drivers to prove citizenship and English proficiency to ensure safe roads and stop illegal labor from undermining Oklahoma jobs. He also opposed a dangerous expansion of municipal powers that would allow cities to slap liens on private property for code violations, and then take the property—standing against yet another government overreach into property rights.

Taken together, it's easy to see why West's score is so high, and why his cumulative average—97%—places him among the most conservative lawmakers in Oklahoma history. Year after year, he has stood on the side of limited government, traditional values, and defending the rights of ordinary Oklahomans against the heavy hand of bureaucracy and special interests.

"Serving in the Legislature is a trust," West said. "My votes reflect the values of the people I represent: faith, family, freedom, and the right to live without government interference in our daily lives. That's the standard I've lived by, and that's what I'll continue to do."

Lab Grown Meat

Continued from Page 1

raised the right way," he said. "And our producers deserve a level playing field.

If lab meat is legitimized, you can bet it won't be long before it's subsidized, marketed with taxpayer money, and forced onto shelves at the expense of family farmers."

For West, the fight against lab-grown meat is about more than cattle.

It's about preserving a way of life that sustains rural Oklahoma.

"I'll keep standing against these proposals because this is bigger than a single product," he said.

"This is about who controls our food, who profits from it, and whether Oklahoma families and ranchers get pushed aside in the name of so-called progress."

West will continue to stay engaged, debate against and oppose any attempt to legitimize lab-grown meat.

"Lab meat isn't innovation — it's an attack on Oklahoma's ranchers and our way of life."

— Rep. Rick West



Scan the Code to Friend Rick on Facebook