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Oklahoma treasurer fighting deposition

Order part of suit over use of messaging app

Dale Denwalt
The Oklahoman
USA TODAY NETWORK

Oklahoma State Treasurer Todd Russ has gone to the Oklahoma Supreme Court as he attempts to avoid being deposed in an open records lawsuit.

In December, Russ was ordered by an Oklahoma County judge to spend up to two hours answering questions about his office's use of the encrypted, self-deleting messaging app Signal to conduct state business.

Oklahoma County District Court Judge Natalie Mai ordered Russ to sit for a deposition in a lawsuit filed by FOIA Professional Services, a third-party research firm that is digging into the treasurer's alleged coordination with groups that are opposed to ESG,

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Senate sets education priorities

Initiatives aim to boost literacy and teacher pay

Alexia Aston
The Oklahoman
USA TODAY NETWORK

State lawmakers in the Senate charged with overseeing education policy will pursue raising teacher pay and improving literacy rates among elementary school students, calling the initiatives a "plan," not a "wish list."

The legislative priorities laid out by leaders of the Senate Education Committee signal how they plan to move on from the era of embattled conservative firebrand Ryan Walters, who stepped down from his post as state schools superintendent in 2025. One of the Capitol's key education policy architects is now running to replace him.

Sen. Adam Pugh, a Republican from

See EDUCATION, Page 6A

A NEW DIMENSION

Tulsa football is changing game with transfer Portal House

Joe Mussatto
Columnist
The Oklahoman
USA TODAY NETWORK

TULSA — Off Utica Avenue four miles southwest of campus sits a charming home with a stone and vinyl facade accented by navy shutters. A bay window overlooks the semi-circle driveway. Brick steps and an iron railing lead to a blue front door with an "open" sign hanging from it.

It's an entryway into college football's new dimension.

Welcome to the Portal House — Tulsa football's take on the Heisman House meets "MTV Cribs" meets frat house meets NFL Draft war room.

For the past two weeks, ever since the sport's 15-day transfer portal window opened, this 3,500 square-foot abode has served as Golden Hurricane HQ. It's where Tulsa GM Mason Behiel has slept every night of the new year. Where head coach Tre Lamb and his staff have crunched film, courted players and crafted contracts.

There's no setting as emblematic of this modern era of college football quite like the Portal House, the ultimate *"why didn't we think of that"* idea that programs big and small will no doubt copy this time next year. (Tulsa, knowing this, is attempting to trademark the "Portal House" name.)

Lamb, giving a tour of the home Wednesday, Jan. 14, walked to the fridge and cracked open a wild berry-flavored Poppi. He lifted the can.

"We've got all kinds of people sending us stuff," Lamb said.

Everyone wants a piece of the now-viral Portal House, which Tulsa football reserved on Airbnb. It has five bedrooms and four bathrooms — portal potties, if you will. The house sleeps up to 14 guests.

"I'm gonna be bummed out when we have to get out of here," said Behiel, who joined Tulsa in December 2024 after serving as the assistant athletic director for football at Fresno State.

Lamb has also spent a handful of nights at the house, saving himself 40 minutes round-trip driving from the football office to his actual house in south Tulsa.

The Portal House isn't just a place to entertain prospective players. It's where Tulsa's staff can collaborate under one roof on a near 24/7 basis during the craziest two weeks on the calendar.

See MUSSATTO, Page 2A

TOP: From left, Dominique Davenport, running backs coach; Dominique Franks, passing game coordinator and cornerbacks coach; and Tyler Dell, defensive analyst, play a video game Jan. 14 at the University of Tulsa Portal House. BRYAN TERRY/THE OKLAHOMAN

Report: Devon Energy, Coterra Energy talk merger

David French
Reuters

NEW YORK - Oklahoma City-based Devon Energy and Coterra Energy are exploring a potential merger, in a deal that could create one of the largest independent U.S. shale producers, people familiar with the matter said.

Devon's corporate headquarters are in downtown Oklahoma City, while Coterra is based out of Houston but also has offices in downtown Tulsa.

A possible combination, which would rank among the largest between U.S. energy producers in recent years, comes as U.S. crude prices remain pressured by a near-term global oil glut and the prospect of higher supplies entering the market in coming years from Venezuela.

The two companies are said to be in

See MERGER, Page 3A

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