

Treasurer: Okla. economy continues to improve

by Sean Murphy

Published: December 1st, 2011

OKLAHOMA CITY – Oklahoma's revenue collections continued to climb last month, pushing the state's 12-month gross receipts to their highest level in more than two years, Oklahoma Treasurer Ken Miller said Thursday.

Revenue figures released by Miller's office show gross collections over the past 12 months totaled nearly \$10.6 billion, an increase of more than 9 percent over the 12-month period that ended in November 2010.

"The last time 12-month receipts were higher than today was two-and-a-half years ago, in May 2009, when collections stood at \$10.77 billion," said Miller, an economist and former chairman of the House Appropriations Committee who was elected treasurer last year. "Since we hit the depths of the recession in February 2010, almost two-thirds of the lost revenue has been recovered."

For the month of November, gross collections were 13.2 percent higher than November 2010.

"We are again seeing growth in all areas measured by revenue collections, which points to an economically healthy holiday season," Miller said.

Miller's figures include gross state revenue collections, not just those to the state's general fund, which is used to fund state government. For example, sales tax collections in Miller's report include nearly 50 percent in receipts that are refunded by the state to cities and towns. The state's general revenue fund typically makes up about 40 percent of gross collections, and those figures will be released later this month by the Office of State Finance.

Overall sales tax collections in Miller's report totaled \$321 million in November, an increase of more than 7 percent over the same time in 2010. November's collections do not include those from Black Friday, as sales taxes on purchases made after Nov. 15 will be reported next month.

Gross income tax collections, which include both personal and corporate income taxes, totaled \$241 million in November, an increase of more than 14 percent from the previous November. The production tax on oil and natural gas was up 10 percent from last year, while motor vehicle taxes grew by more than 12 percent.

Despite the continued positive economic growth, state leaders are predicting a relatively flat budget for the next fiscal year, because about \$500 million in one-time revenue was used in the current year's state budget. Lawmakers also will be without an estimated \$70 million in lost revenue from the state's income tax, which drops for the 2012 tax year from 5.5 percent to 5.25 percent.