



Unemployment Claims Surge In Arizona

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New data released by the Arizona Department of Economic Security shows that over 250,000 Arizonan's have applied for unemployment assistance since the COVID-19 pandemic began. DES reported that they have distributed more than \$26.9 million in Unemployment Insurance payments to Arizonans as a result of an unprecedented number of Arizonans applying for unemployment benefits. Claims for unemployment benefits due to COVID-19 have led to unprecedented volume for the Department, including a record number of applications, benefits paid and calls received. DES says they are busier than ever as last week they answered 22,000 phone calls. Last year, only 3,400 calls came in during the same week. Beginning April 19, call centers will be open on Sundays from 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more information click [here](#).

Arizona will not re-open on May 1st

On a conference call Monday, the Governor's office told Arizona mayors that the state will follow President Trump's plan to reopen the economy in phases, but that they are not prepared to take the first step yet. According to phase one of President Trump's **three step plan**, all "vulnerable individuals" would stay home when they can and those who do go out would continue to practice social distancing and avoid gatherings of 10 or more people. Schools and bars would remain closed and visits to senior living facilities would be prohibited. However, gyms, movie theaters, sporting venues and large venues could open if they allow for physical distancing and properly sanitized surfaces. The Governor has been receiving daily input from the business community about future measures and his staff indicated that they will assess all viable options given the April 30th stay-at-home order deadline. When I receive more information, I will update you!

ADE Audit Conducted

An audit into the Empowerment Scholarship Account Program showed that the Department of Education needs to hire 21 additional full-time employees in order to run the program efficiently. Requested by the Joint Legislative Audit Committee, the audit covered FY18 through FY20 and focused on how the department spent ESA money and how employees operated when dealing with parents. The audit found parents dealt with an average wait time of 24 minutes on the phone before receiving help and that it took the department roughly five workdays to respond via email. Additionally, ADE also missed its 45-day deadline to accept or reject ESA applications on average 55 percent of the time between July 2017 and October 2019. The auditors concluded that ADE would need 21 new full-time employees in the ESA division to complete all necessary tasks for

FY21, those positions will be made up of one program director, an auditor, an administrative assistant, three managers, and 15 positions assigned to performing key tasks.

Blue Cross Blue Shield Gives Donation

In an effort to support the AZ Coronavirus Relief Fund, it was announced Monday that Blue Cross Blue Shield of Arizona has donated \$50,000. The fund established as part of the Arizona Together initiative provides financial support to organizations working to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 and has collected more than \$6 million since its conception. Blue Cross Blue Shield of Arizona has been an ardent supporter of Arizona's response to the pandemic early on. Prior to the generous contribution, the company provided nearly 1,000 N95 masks to the Arizona Department of Health Services and donated face masks to Arizona food banks, school districts and grocery stores.

Individuals and organizations interested in supporting the AZ Coronavirus Relief Fund can learn more about how to contribute by clicking [here](#). Organizations in need of financial support for programs that are supporting Arizonans during the COVID-19 outbreak can also submit their initial requests on the [website](#).

Governor Ducey Partners with UArizona

Governor Ducey and University of Arizona President Robert Robbins announced a partnership to provide antibody tests for 250,000 health care professionals and first responders in Arizona. With this partnership, Arizona will become the first state to do statewide antibody testing for healthcare professionals and first responders. Given free of charge, the test will measure a person's immunity to the virus by checking if they have the antibodies necessary to fight it. According to university officials, depending on the results of this method, expanding the testing availability to the general public won't be ruled out.

Governor Jane Hull Passes Away

Arizona's first elected female Governor and first female speaker of the House, Governor Jane Hull passed away late last week at the age of 84. Known for her pragmatic approach to public policy and quick witted personality, Governor Hull was an Arizona trailblazer. A former Kansas City schoolteacher, she first won elected office as a state representative in 1978. While she was serving as the first Republican Secretary of State in more than six decades, then Governor Fife Symington was convicted by a grand jury in 1997 and Hull succeeded him to become the second female ever to hold the office in state history. She then went on to win a full term as Governor the following year, becoming Arizona's first elected female Governor. A member of the "[Fab Five](#)", the election in 1998 was particularly significant because it was the first time in the history of the United States that all five of the top elected executive offices in one state were held by women. In remembrance of her over 25 years of public service, Governor Ducey ordered all state flags to be lowered to half-staff.

*It is important to note that while Governor Rose Mofford was Arizona's first female Governor, she ascended to the office while serving as Secretary of State. She did not run for a full term, making Governor Hull the first female to be elected to the office in state history.



Arizona Update on Issues



Click here to find COVID-19 resources and volunteer opportunities

Click here for the latest COVID-19 statistics

Upcoming Legislators' Birthdays



Happy Birthday
Senator Sean Bowie (D)
Tuesday, April 21st

Representing LD18, Senator Bowie is serving his second term at the Capitol. Earning his B.S. in political science from ASU in 2008 and M.P.P. from Carnegie Mellon University in 2013, he works as a Professor at ASU's School of Public Affairs. Since his tenure at the Capitol began, Bowie has been highly regarded by his peers as a champion for mental health awareness. This session, his top legislative priorities are ensuring the passage of SB1444 requiring the Department of Education to identify mental health as an excused absence and SB1445 which makes it mandatory for all school counselors and social workers to enroll in a suicide prevention training class. To wish Senator Bowie happy birthday: sbowie@azleg.gov



Happy Birthday
Rep. Mark Finchem (R)
Friday, April 24th

Representing LD11, Representative Finchem was first elected to the Arizona House in 2015. A Michigan native, he worked for the Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety for 21 years before moving to Tucson in 1999. Multi skilled, he has worked for a software manufacturer and is a licensed real estate agent. At the Legislature he serves as Chairman of the House Federal Relations committee and is a member of the House Judiciary and Natural Resources committees. His top legislative priority this session is HCR2042 which establishes a classroom code of ethics in our schools. To wish Representative Finchem happy birthday: mfinchem@azleg.gov

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