



Republican lawmakers begin meeting

Latest on possible 2020 special session

Republican lawmakers began meeting last week, for the first time since mid-June, to discuss financial aid for landlords. Also, stakeholder groups comprised of four Senate and four House members, have been discussing approaches to K-12 in-person learning and refining a potential limited liability bill for small business owners across the state. If the liability bill can garner support from a majority of lawmakers, the Legislature could request a special session call and reconvene this year; however, President Fann has indicated that the Governor's Office prefers to address this issue early next session and make it apply retroactively to lawsuits filed in 2020. (note: ambiguity exists about the degree to which retroactive legislation can alter previously existing legal rights and remedies.)

It remains unclear if or when Governor Ducey will call lawmakers back to the Capitol for a special session. The Arizona Constitution provides a special session can be called in two ways. Governor Ducey can call lawmakers back at any time to reconvene or, in the absence of a call by the Governor, legislative leaders can convene the body with a two-thirds vote. This would require Democratic and Republican leadership to broker a deal to move forward without the Governor. According to President Fann, lawmakers are reluctant to return because of apprehension that any special session would not have a narrow focus and could easily become overtly political.

As more information becomes available, we will update you.

Statewide COVID-19 deaths decline

After a recent drop in COVID-19 deaths, statewide health officials are optimistic that Arizona is past its peak. According to the Arizona Department of Health Services (AZDHS) dashboard, new data indicates that statewide COVID-19 deaths fell by about 18% (558 to 449) between July 19th and July 25th – the first time since mid-May that deaths fell.

In addition, the number of inpatient hospitalizations, ICU beds occupied and ventilators in use also dropped. AZDHS data shows that 83% of inpatient beds and 78% of ICU beds were in use, which includes people being treated for COVID-19 and other patients. Overall, 33% of ventilators were in use. The state has the second lowest COVID-19 rate of spread (Rt) at 0.83 (the average number of people a COVID-positive individual will infect) and the rolling seven-day average positivity rate for newly reported cases continues to trend downward. It stands currently at 11.5 percent, which suggests the need for more testing and the virus is still widespread. A positivity rate of 5% is considered a good indicator that the spread is being controlled.

For more information on free COVID-19 testing sites click [here](#).

Healthcare initiative ruled off ballot

Stop Surprise Billing and Protect Patients Act, an initiative that would require hospitals to increase the wages of practically all non-managerial hospital employees by five percent upon implementation, was ruled off the ballot by the Maricopa County Superior Court.

Earlier, the Arizona Hospital and Healthcare Association filed suit against the initiative arguing that the initiative process was flawed because it never identified California based Service Employees International Union (SEIU) as its sponsor and source of its funds. Additionally, the Capitol association argued that the 100-word statement was misleading because the text referring to “direct care hospital workers” was overly broad. The initiative indicated that “direct care hospital workers” applied to nurses, aides, technicians, janitorial and housekeeping staff, food service workers and non-managerial administrative staff but not doctors. The lawsuit claimed this was an issue because a reasonable voter would interpret the definition to mean that wage rates would be adjusted for those directly involved in the care of patients such as a physician or a nurse.

Maricopa County Judge Pamela Gates ruled that there were not enough valid signatures on the petitions submitted and that some circulators were not legally qualified to circulate the petitions. Some of the 332 circulators subpoenaed by foes of the initiative failed to appear in court to be questioned, so the court rejected the signatures they gathered. Judge Gates also found that the 100-word summary was misleading and created significant danger of confusion or unfairness to those who signed petitions, particularly the description that insurers would be prohibited from discriminating based on preexisting conditions. The Judge also found that the evidence showed about 60 percent of Arizonans are insured through an employer’s self-funded insurance plan, and that the initiative would apply only to the purchase of individual or group insurance plans. As a result, the court found signers were misled about whether the measure would not aid a majority of Arizonans.

Backers of the initiative plan to appeal the ruling to the Arizona Supreme Court. As more information becomes available, we will update you.

To read the decision by Judge Gates, click [here](#).

To read Stop Surprise Billing and Protect Patients Act, click [here](#).

Criminal Justice Reform initiative lacks sufficient valid signatures

Second Chances Rehabilitation and Public Safety act, a criminal justice reform measure that would provide "earned release credits" which offenders could use to cut down their prison sentences, was found to have insufficient ballot petition signatures by Secretary of State Katie Hobbs.

The Secretary of State’s Office found that the signature failure rate for the initiative was too high, so the estimated total number of valid signatures did not meet the minimum threshold to appear on the ballot. In July, the initiative filed 397,291 signatures. Once county election officials analyzed a 5 percent random sample of signatures and found the initiative had a 64 percent validity rate and just under 217,000 valid signatures – about 20,000 short of the minimum requirement, the measure failed to qualify.

Supporters of the initiative plan to appeal the decision to the Maricopa County Superior Court. As more information becomes available, we will update you.

To read the decision by Secretary of State Hobbs, click [here](#).

To read Second Chances Rehabilitation and Public Safety act, click [here](#).

Governor announces relief for childcare and small businesses

Governor Ducey announced that \$98 million will be allocated to help workers and businesses impacted by COVID-19.

Funded by the CARES Act, approximately \$88 million will be given to support childcare programs throughout the state. These dollars will support the reopening of childcare centers, provide care for the children of essential workers through Arizona Enrichment Centers, and help working parents manage absences from school.

An additional \$10 million will be allocated to support small businesses across the state. Supported by the Arizona Crisis Contingency and Safety Net Fund, these funds will go toward rent and mortgage assistance for Arizona small businesses required to pause operations due to the pandemic. Through a partnership with the Local First Arizona Foundation, the newly developed Arizona Small Business Rent and Mortgage Relief Grant program will help struggling small businesses meet their rent or mortgage obligations, with a focus on those most in need and without access to other resources.

Below is a breakdown of the \$88 million in new funding to support childcare services:

- **Child Care COVID-19 Grant Program** - \$47 Million
- **Arizona Enrichment Centers Program** - \$24 Million
- **Increase Paid Absences** - \$7 Million
- **Child Care Reserves** - \$10 Million

For more information on assisting childcare services, click [here](#).

For more information on supporting small businesses, click [here](#).

Unemployment benefit increase is extended

Governor Ducey announced that he is partnering with the Trump administration to extend unemployment benefits to nearly 400,000 Arizonans.

Under a new executive order signed by President Trump, Arizonans are now eligible to receive unemployment benefits of \$540 a week, with \$300 a week provided through Federal Emergency Management (FEMA) funding. The payments will also be made retroactive for each week after July 26th, when the additional federal payments of \$600 lapsed.

Since March, Arizona has paid out more than \$8.5 billion in unemployment benefits to more than 1.1 million individuals during the pandemic. This includes more than 800,000 Arizonans who have received benefits through the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance program established by the CARES Act.

For more information on unemployment assistance, click [here](#).

Voters set record turnout

Arizona voters set a record turnout in the primary election with more than 1.45 million (over 36%) of registered voters casting ballots. According to Arizona Secretary of State officials, 88% of ballots came from early voting and voters chose *752,223 Republican* and *694,891 Democratic* ballots, which comes out to roughly a 52-48 split. This split is worthwhile to note as it is the smallest margin of Republican and Democrat voters in history. Democrats have been narrowing

the turnout gap in each of the last few primary election cycles, but it remains unclear if this translates into a narrower performance gap come the general election.

The voter registration deadline for the general election is on October 5th and voters are encouraged to mail ballots back by October 27th. Voters can also drop off their ballots at their polling place or vote center.

For more information on how to register to vote, click [here](#).



Governor Ducey Provides COVID-19 Update



Arizona Update on Issues



Click here to find COVID-19 resources and volunteer opportunities

Click here to find the AGA 2020 primary analysis

Upcoming Legislators' Birthdays



Happy Birthday Sen. Frank Pratt (R) Thursday, August 27th

Representing LD8, Senator Pratt was first elected to the Legislature in 2009. An Arizona native, he has owned and operated a swimming pool construction business since 1986. At the Legislature, he serves as Chairman of the Senate Natural Resources and Energy committee and is Vice Chairman



Happy Birthday Rep. Walt Blackman (R) Sunday, August 30th

Representing LD6, Representative Blackman is serving his first term at the Legislature. He is the first Black Republican elected in Arizona. Born in Portugal, Blackman was raised on a military base where his father was a pilot in the United States Air Force. Following his father, Blackman enlisted and

of both the Senate Transportation and Water committees. A former rancher, his top legislative priority this session was SB1206 which would have established the Agricultural Workforce Development Program in the Department of Agriculture to provide incentives to food-producing agricultural organizations to hire interns by partially reimbursing internship costs. To wish Senator Pratt happy birthday: fpratt@azleg.gov

served 21 years in the United States Army, earning a Bronze Star for combat action as a tank commander in Iraq. At the Legislature, he serves as Vice Chairman of the House Judiciary and State and International Affairs committees. This session his top legislative priority was HB2072 which would have implemented a three-year Arizona Mental Health Professionals Academy Pilot Program at Northern Arizona University to provide incentives for students to enter the mental health profession and commit to working as a mental health professional in Arizona public schools or in a correctional facility. To wish Representative Blackman happy birthday: wblackman@azleg.gov

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