



## #AZResilient

### **Governor's State Of State Address Delivered Remotely**

Titled #AZResilient, Governor Ducey's State of the State Address focused on key priorities, including combatting COVID-19, vaccine distribution, aiding those impacted by the COVID-19 fiscal shortfall, and K-12 education.

On reopening schools statewide Governor Ducey stated, "with every public-health professional, from Dr. Fauci and the CDC on down, saying that the safest place for kids to be is in school.... we will not be funding empty seats or allowing schools to remain in a perpetual state of closure. Children still need to learn, even in a pandemic."

Superintendent of Public Instruction Kathy Hoffman disagreed with the Governor, writing that the address "ignored the reality of the worsening spread of COVID-19 and its severe impact on our schools, students, and teachers." The Governor's staff clarified he was not considering cutting funding for virtual students but "meant that for parents who have chosen a new option for their kids, the money would follow that student to their new public school."

The Governor is expected to release his baseline budget proposal on Friday, January 15. Anticipated priorities for FY2022 include tax cuts, COVID-19 liability protection for businesses, expanding access to broadband internet, and offering laptop wi-fi to students who lack access.

### **President Fann Issues Emergency COVID-19 Protocol Rule**

Senate President Karen Fann issued an emergency rule for the legislative session. If any lawmaker removes a mask or otherwise fails to comply with protocols on the floor or in committee hearings, the hearing or floor session will recess until the offending lawmaker complies with the rules.

If Senate leadership (President Fann, Majority Leader Rick Gray, and Minority Leader Rebecca Rios) determines that any in-person meeting would cause increased health risks, only five lawmakers will be allowed in the committee hearing room, with the rest participating by video call from their offices. Lawmakers must be alone in their respective offices while participating and keep their video cameras on at all times. Any votes cast remotely must be verified in writing.

If Senate leadership determines in-person hearings pose a health risk, lobbyists and members of the public who wish to testify on bills will be given information to call into the meeting. Agendas for each committee will include instructions to email a specific Senate committee staffer to request remote access to the hearing and the request must be made at least 24 hours in advance.

Members of the public who wish to testify on a bill can sign up by clicking [here](#).

To read the complete list of Senate COVID-19 health protocols, click [here](#).

### **Superintendent Of Public Instruction Calls For Remote Learning**

Superintendent of Public Instruction Kathy Hoffman urged Governor Ducey to order all schools to remain in distance learning for two weeks after winter break to align with current Arizona Department of Health Services (AZDHS) benchmarks.

Existing AZDHS benchmarks indicate that schools may open if there is minimal to moderate virus spread in the community, but should take extensive precautions, such as keeping some students at home, requiring masks, and creating physical distancing. If a school is in a county where all three benchmarks show substantial spread for two weeks, it should prepare for remote learning. If one benchmark shows substantial spread for two weeks, the recommendation is to consult with local health officials about a move to remote learning.

In response, the Governor's Office stated, "this is a local decision, the online option is already available, and the Governor has repeatedly made his preference clear.... kids have already lost out on a lot of learning and he wants schools opened, safely."

A dashboard available [here](#), indicates whether counties meet the recommended benchmarks for the initial reopening of in-person learning in schools.

To review Benchmarks for Safely Returning to In-Person Instruction, click [here](#).

To review School Benchmarks by County, click [here](#).

### **Banner Health Halts Elective Surgeries**

Banner Health, Arizona's largest health system, announced that beginning January 1, all non-urgent elective surgeries and procedures will be postponed due to the increase of COVID-19 patients.

Banner Chief Clinical Officer Dr. Marjorie Bessel emphasized that its Arizona hospital system has hit 104% of licensed bed capacity and several hospitals have recently gone on 'diversion', or temporarily closed to emergency transports or hospital transfers, due to a backlog of patients.

Neither the Governor nor AZDHS Director Christ has currently announced a statewide elective surgery pause. A prior Executive Order signed in April 2020 directed that hospitals could only perform elective surgeries if at least 20% of beds were available.

To read the existing Executive Order, click [here](#).

### **AZDHS Issues COVID-19 Update**

Arizona Department of Health Services (AZDHS) reported 93% of inpatient beds and 93% of ICU beds in use, which includes people being treated for COVID-19 and other patients. COVID-19 patients are using 57% of all inpatient beds and 62% of ICU beds. Overall, 60% of ventilators are in use. The state's COVID-19 rate of spread (Rt) is above 1 at 1.09 (the average number of people a COVID-positive individual will infect). Of known test results from last week, AZDHS reported that 26% have come back positive. A positivity rate of 5% or less is considered a good indicator that the spread is being controlled.

According to the AZDHS dashboard, only 7% of the state's ICU beds are readily available, or approximately 128 beds for COVID and non-COVID patients alike.

To view the AZDHS dashboard, click [here](#).

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

## AZDHS COVID-19 Vaccine Update

Arizona Department of Health Services (AZDHS) has administered 101,030 doses of the state's supply of 314,750 vaccines.

Last week, the state received an additional 140,000 vaccine doses, 60,000 of which are second doses for individuals who have already received their first shot. This allotment will bring the statewide total for doses received to nearly 255,000 Pfizer-BioNTech doses and more than 201,000 Moderna doses.

While the state remains almost entirely in Phase 1A, the Maricopa County Department of Public Health Administration indicated that it will open appointments at POD (point of distribution) sites for Phase 1B vaccinations starting January 11. This group will include essential workers such as teachers, police, and emergency response staff; utility, and public transport workers; and state and local government employees. People in Phase 1B are asked to bring their proof of age or employment when they arrive to get their vaccines. County officials are working on creating more options to register for appointments for those who do not have access to the internet. Appointments will be limited until more doses are received.

Eligible workers in Phase 1A can sign up online through their county to get prescreened for an appointment time. More information can be found [here](#).

Eligible workers in Phase 1B located in Maricopa County can find more information [here](#).



## Governor Gives State of State



## Arizona Update on the Issues



[Click here to find COVID-19 resources and volunteer opportunities](#)

[Click here to find out how to donate a mobile hotspot](#)

## Legislators' Birthdays



Happy Birthday  
Sen. Rick Gray (R)  
Saturday, January 16th

Representing LD21, Senator and Majority Leader Gray was first elected to the Legislature in 2011 and served until 2016. He was appointed to the Senate in 2018 to replace State Senator (now Congresswoman) Debbie Lesko. A native of Nebraska, Gray moved to Arizona in 2006. He is a small business owner and previously was a real estate agent.

This session, Gray will serve as Vice Chairman of the Rules Committee. In addition, he will be a member of the Senate Education, Natural Resources and Water, and Transportation committees. Outside of the Legislature, Gray is a member of the Sun City Homeowners Association, Sun City Taxpayers Association and serves as a board member of Northwest Valley Connect.

To wish Representative Gray happy birthday:  
[rgray@azleg.gov](mailto:rgray@azleg.gov)

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