



Senate COVID-19 Protocols; House To Follow Suit

Senate President Karen Fann (LD1) announced COVID-19 mitigation strategies for the upcoming Legislative session.

Anyone entering the Senate building must wear a face mask and have their temperature checked at the door. President Fann emphasized that masks must stay on whenever more than one person is in a room and failing to comply with the rules could result in an early end of the session. “I am convinced that adherence to these protocols is necessary to eliminate some of the divisiveness we have encountered throughout this pandemic.... failure to adhere could result in lack of quorums, inability to conduct voting, and other work we need to accomplish, or ultimately session shutdown.”

Additional COVID-19 mitigation strategies include:

- Anyone who is sick, or is known to have been exposed to COVID-19 but doesn't show symptoms, will be barred from entering the building until at least 10 days have passed since symptoms appeared or the person last took a positive COVID-19 test.
- If a Senator, employee, or visitor was exposed to a COVID-19 patient, he or she must stay away for at least 14 days, with some exceptions.
- Members of the public will only be allowed into the building to participate in committee hearings or attend scheduled meetings with lawmakers, and must leave the building once their activity ends.

Speaker Bowers announced that the House will be following the same guidelines next session.

House Republican Caucus Tension Poses Challenge For Session

A few Republican caucus members have suggested that they will withhold voting for incumbent House Speaker Rusty Bowers (LD25) before the 55th Legislature convenes on January 11th, 2021.

Representative Bret Roberts (LD11) sent a [letter](#) to his colleagues expressing his concerns about Speaker Bowers (click for link). Representatives Mark Finchem (LD11) and David Cook (LD8) may also withhold their votes, preventing Speaker Bowers from retaining his position with just Republican votes.

According to [House Rule 4, section A](#), the House Speaker needs a majority vote (31 votes) to be elected if a quorum is present (click for link). House leadership has begun lobbying moderate Democrats to support Bowers if there are not 31 Republican votes; however, Democrats have indicated that they plan to support House Minority Leader Reginald Bolding (LD27) for the speakership. Concessions that could gain Democrat votes for Bowers include in-state tuition for DACA recipients, additional money for the housing trust fund, and increased appropriations allocated to Democrat budget priorities.

If no candidate is able to get 31 votes, the speakership title would go to the oldest member of the chamber, Representative Frank Pratt (LD8). As per [ARS 41-1101](#), the oldest member of the chamber gavel the session into order and swears in the other lawmakers (click for link). Only then can the chamber hold another vote for speaker and other leadership positions. If the chamber cannot get 31 votes for any speaker candidate, the oldest member maintains the position until a consensus is reached.

Resolution Filed To End Governor's Emergency Order

Senator Michelle Ugenti-Rita (LD23), Chairman of the Ad Hoc Study Committee on Legislative Oversight of Emergency Executive Powers, is sponsoring SCR1001 (state of emergency declaration; termination), which would immediately end the state of emergency that Governor Ducey declared on March 11th, 2020.

SCR1001 would not require the Governor's signature and would only need a majority vote in both chambers. According to [ARS 26-303](#), an emergency order can end only when it has been terminated by the governor's proclamation or by concurrent resolution of the Legislature (click for link). Passage of the SCR could put additional federal funding allocated to the state for COVID-19 related appropriations and vaccine use at risk.

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 53% of all inpatient beds and 61% of ICU beds. Overall, 58% of ventilators are in use. The state's COVID-19 rate of spread (Rt) is below 1 at 0.93 (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 131 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) did not receive an expected allocation of 70,200 doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, but rather only 41,925 doses. According to AZDHS officials, states were given estimates that turned out to be based on vaccine doses produced, not those that had completed quality control and were releasable.

AZDHS received 119,400 Moderna vaccine doses last week, allowing for COVID-19 vaccinations in all 15 counties. Maricopa County received 18,500, and Pima County, 17,000.

Maricopa County has launched five drive-thru vaccination sites. The sites are located across the county and run by Banner Health and HonorHealth. The sites already vaccinated a combined 1,000 health care workers and first responders. When operating at full capacity each site will vaccinate about 1,000 people daily for a countywide tally of about 5,000 shots a day.

Distribution will be conducted in priority phases before the general population has access.

Phase 1A: Health care personnel, frontline workers, and long-term care facility residents and staff.

Phase 1B: Essential workers such as teachers, police, and emergency response

staff; utility, and public transport workers; and state and local government employees.

Phase 1C: People at high risk of contracting a severe case of COVID-19, including those 65 and older and adults in congregate settings, such as prisons.

Phase 2: General population.

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

Federal COVID-19 Relief Bill Enacted

Following months of negotiations, Congress enacted and President Trump signed into law a \$900 billion COVID-19 aid bill for households and businesses, and funding for vaccine distribution. The emergency relief starts now and will expire on April 30th, 2021. The relief package was combined with a \$1.4 trillion spending bill needed to keep the government running until September 2021.

The relief bill includes:

- **Paycheck Protection Program:** \$325 billion for the Small Business Administration (SBA) to allow the hardest-hit small businesses to receive a second forgivable Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan. Eligibility is limited to small businesses with 300 or fewer employees that have sustained a 30% revenue loss in any quarter of 2020.
- **Unemployment Assistance:** \$120 billion to extend all pandemic unemployment insurance programs by 16 weeks, with benefits expanded by \$300 a week until March 14th.
- **Direct Payments:** \$166 billion towards the second round of economic impact payments. Households would receive \$600 for each adult and \$600 for each dependent. The payments would be based on income from 2019 and begin phasing out for individuals with adjusted gross incomes over \$75,000 and married couples over \$150,000.
- **Support for Healthcare Providers:** \$9 billion for health-care providers, \$4.5 billion for mental health, and more than \$1 billion for the National Institutes of Health to conduct Covid-19 research.
- **Testing and Tracing:** \$22 billion for testing, tracing, and Covid-19 mitigation programs. Of this, \$2.5 billion would be sent as grants targeting rural areas and communities of color.
- **Rental Assistance:** Extends the current CDC eviction moratorium until the end of January 2021 and allocates \$25 billion in rental assistance to states, local governments, and tribes.

To read a summary of the COVID-19 relief package, click [here](#).

Happy New Year

Arizona Governmental Affairs is grateful for the opportunity to continue serving you.

If you have any additional questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me. I hope you and your families have a peaceful and healthy holiday break and all of us at AGA wish you a Happy New Year.



Governor Ducey Holds COVID-19 Vaccine Update



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[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
Rep. Diego Espinoza
Saturday, January 2nd

Representing LD19, Representative Diego Espinoza was first elected to the Legislature in 2014. An Arizona native, he earned a B.A. in business management from Ottawa University and an A.A. in organizational leadership from Estrella Mountain Community College. A small business owner, Espinoza is the owner and manager of Fuego Bar and Grill.

Last session, Espinoza was a member of the Appropriations Committee, and Government and Higher Education Committee. A top legislative priority for Espinoza was HB2450 which would have established the Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation and Referral Pilot Program to support the social and emotional well-being of children who are not yet in kindergarten and to prevent, identify, and reduce challenging behaviors.

Next session, Espinoza will serve as a Ranking Member of the Rules Committee and a member of the Commerce committee.

To wish Representative Dunn happy birthday:
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