



## Arizona Economy To Remain Open

### Governor Ducey press conference on effects of uptick in COVID-19 cases

Governor Ducey and Arizona Department of Health Services (AZDHS) Director Christ indicated that the state's economy will remain open amid a rise of new COVID-19 cases and the likelihood that some counties will return to the category of "substantial spread." State officials have emphasized that the recent increase in positive COVID-19 cases is far different from earlier this year. Arizona now has broad access to testing and increased contact tracing, and businesses are operating differently under a series of guidelines.

According to AZDHS, the rise in new COVID-19 cases appears to involve local hotspots rather than statewide spread. Last week, Pima and Coconino counties surpassed the state's 'moderate' benchmark of cases per 100,000 individuals for business reopening for one week. Under existing state benchmarks, a county having more than 100 cases per 100,000 people for two consecutive weeks constitutes 'substantial' spread. By contrast, the statewide rate of infection remains below 100 per 100,000 residents, which puts Arizona in the moderate range. AZDHS will collaborate with county health departments to identify targeted areas, so officials can work with business owners in COVID-19 hotspots to avoid any shutdown of operations. Director Christ has proposed additional mitigation strategies for businesses to remain open, such as further reducing the number of customers permitted at any one time.

The increase in new COVID-19 cases will not result in a statewide closure of schools. Arizona has issued "recommendations" for when in-person classes can start and local districts are free to follow them, in whole or in part, or disregard them.

To review AZDHS business benchmarks by county, click [here](#).

## **AZDHS issues COVID-19 update**

Arizona Department of Health Services (AZDHS) officials announced that the state will continue to experience a higher than normal COVID-19 case count as a result of new antigen test results. Last week, the state had one of the highest overall infection rates of COVID-19 in the country. According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), Arizona's infection rate was 2,996 per 100,000 people. The national average is 2,078 cases per 100,000 people

AZDHS figures show that 83% of inpatient beds and 80% of ICU beds were in use, which includes people being treated for COVID-19 and other patients. COVID-19 patients were using 8% of all inpatient beds and 8% of ICU beds. Overall, 24% of ventilators were in use. The state's COVID-19 rate of spread (Rt) remains below 1 at 0.94 (the average number of people a COVID-positive individual will infect). Of known test results from last week, AZDHS reported that 4% have come back positive. A positivity rate of 5% or less is considered a good indicator that the spread is being controlled.

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

## **Arizona Universities' receive support**

Governor Ducey announced that the state is investing an additional \$14 million dollars to support the efforts of Arizona State University (ASU), the University of Arizona (UArizona) and Northern Arizona University (NAU) to contain the spread of COVID-19.

The new funding will provide \$8 million for additional testing, surveillance and other response efforts at all three universities, including expanded wastewater testing. Another \$6 million will be allocated for the development of ASU's point-of-need testing, which will allow people such as first responders, health care workers and those in congregate care settings to get COVID-19 test results within minutes. When fully developed, the groundbreaking test would allow a person to spit into a tube which would then automatically send a signal to their cell phone indicating whether they have tested positive or negative for COVID-19. ASU is working quickly to complete development of this test within the next 6 months.

## **Unemployment claims increase**

Arizona Department of Economic Security (AZDES) officials reported that more than 90,000 Arizona residents received unemployment benefits last week, a nearly 30,000 increase from the week before. AZDES figures suggest that the vast majority of claims filed, 83,594, went to the self-employed or contract workers.

More than 320,000 new claims were filed last week, although some claims may include people who filed for multiple weeks of unemployment. Also the

number of new claims does not exclude claims denied for either ineligibility or fraud. The amount of unemployment benefits paid also saw a large drop as supplemental dollars from the federal government were depleted. The state paid \$176 million in claims, compared to \$318 million the previous week.

Without additional action from Congress, the maximum unemployment payment in Arizona will be \$240 per week.

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

### **Governor disputes election changes**

Governor Ducey and Arizona Secretary of State (AZSOS) Katie Hobbs exchanged a series of letters in a dispute over AZSOS guidance to introduce more ways for people to register or vote under certain limited circumstances.

Secretary Hobbs issued new guidelines apparently telling county recorders that they can aid voters who are in the hospital or an assisted care facility to cast their ballots using video conferencing if no family member or caregiver is able to assist them. State [law](#) (click here for the statute reference) allows for “special election boards” comprised of one Republican and one Democrat to meet the voter in person, fill out the ballot as directed, and return it for counting and AZSOS indicated that videoconference satisfies those parameters. It also suggested that people who call an AZSOS hotline looking to submit a voter registration form before the October 5th deadline should be allowed to finish the registration process after the deadline. According to AZSOS, the guidelines are not binding, and it’s up to county election officials to decide whether to use them.

Governor Ducey responded that the guidance was illegal and that changes to election policy must be accomplished through amendments to the Election Procedures Manual or by legislative changes. In a letter to Hobbs, the Governor wrote “the responsibility of election officials to uphold our constitution and laws is not only a crucial responsibility, it should stand as the final test on whether changes to our election policies and procedures are appropriate — no exceptions.” Ducey continued, “these policy changes should be suspended immediately so that Arizonans can continue to have confidence and faith in the integrity of our election system.”

Hobbs replied that the procedures were developed “in close collaboration with your (Governor's) staff and the Arizona Department of Health Services.” Hobbs argued that if the procedures are illegal, the Governor should issue an executive order based on the pandemic emergency authorizing the proposed practices where necessary or, alternatively, authorizing some other solution to ensure that all Arizonans get to vote. She acknowledged no specific legal authority exists since the state election board rules were enacted without any idea that a pandemic such as COVID-19 would create situations where

visitors to nursing homes or other care facilities would not be allowed. According to the Governor's office, he has declined Hobbs' requests to issue an executive order or permit her office to issue executive actions related to voting.

The Governor has asked Attorney General Mark Brnovich to look into the matter. As more information becomes available, we will update you.

To read the proposed changes by Secretary Hobbs, click [here](#).

To read the Governor's response to Secretary Hobbs, click [here](#).

To read Secretary Hobbs' reply to Governor Ducey, click [here](#).



Governor Ducey holds press conference



## Arizona Update on the Issues



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Upcoming reports: 2020 General election analysis and ballot proposition analysis

## Legislators' Birthdays



Happy Birthday  
Senator Karen Fann (R)  
Friday, Sept. 25th

Representing LD1, Senator Fann is one of the most respected leaders at the Capitol. The current Senate President and second woman in state history to hold the position, she was first elected to the Legislature in 2011. Prior to running for state office, Fann was Mayor of the Town of Chino Valley and Mayor Pro Temp of the City of Prescott. Owner & CEO of AZ Highway Safety Specialists, INC, Fann has been a vocal advocate for transportation issues across the state. At the Legislature, she serves as Chairman of the Senate Rules committee. Outside of her duties leading the Chamber, she continues to represent her community by serving as a precinct committeeman and is a member of the Rotary International and Elks. To wish President Fann happy birthday: [kfann@azleg.gov](mailto:kfann@azleg.gov)



Happy Birthday  
Senator Sally Gonzales (D)  
Friday, October 2nd

Representing LD3, Senator Gonzales is serving her first term in the Senate. First elected to the House of Representatives in 1997 and later 2015, Gonzales is an educator. After leaving the legislature in 2000, she continued within her profession, serving as the Education Director of the Pascua Yaqui Tribe. Her professional experience includes teaching, teacher training and administration for Tucson Unified School District, Tempe Elementary Schools, Arizona State University, and University of Arizona. At the Legislature, Gonzales is a member of the Senate Commerce, Education and Higher Education committees. This session, her top legislative priority was SB1562 which would have appropriated \$3 million from the general fund to support three tribal higher education institutions. To wish Senator Gonzales happy birthday: [sgonzales@azleg.gov](mailto:sgonzales@azleg.gov)

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