

Arizona Capitol Times

Your Inside Source for Arizona Government, Politics and Business

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Freedom Caucus wants Greens in debate
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Old rivals face off in LD2
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Rightwing org wants list from voter reg SNAFU
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COURT BURIES FINDING JUSTICES ERRED IN WEARING ROBES AT RELIGIOUS FUNCTION

Arizona Supreme Court Justices from left; William Montgomery, John Lopez IV, then-Vice Chief Justice Ann Scott Timmer, then-Chief Justice Robert Brutinel, Clint Bolick and James Beene listen to oral arguments on April 20, 2021, in Phoenix. The Arizona Supreme Court recently withdrew a Judicial Ethics Advisory Committee opinion that justices cannot wear official robes at religious functions, such as Justices Montgomery and Kathryn King recently wore to the Red Mass. (AP Photo/Matt York, File)

BY KIERA RILEY, kriley@stateaffairs.com

An opinion finding justices were wrong to wear robes to a religious event was kept from the public after the Arizona Supreme Court recently changed how it oversees an ethics committee.

The Judicial Ethics Advisory Committee received a request to weigh in on the ethical implications of judges wearing official robes at the Red Mass, an annual Roman Catholic gathering aimed at attorneys, lawmakers and judges to

invoke divine guidance in the coming year.

The committee returned a formal opinion against donning a robe at the Red Mass, or any religious service, given a potential appearance of undue influence, and reaffirmed the same upon a request for reconsideration from the state high court. Then, a majority of the justices voted to withdraw

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“They would rather be in the minority and be pure than to have a bigger tent and win.”

Tyler Montague, an East Valley Republican, on why it would be unwise for his party to attempt to unseat Rep. Matt Gress, who is also a Republican.

Capitol Quotes on page 2

Speculation on lieutenant governor candidates has begun

BY REAGAN PRIEST
rpriest@stateaffairs.com

Arizona will elect its first lieutenant governor in 2026, and whoever takes the job will have the opportunity to chart a new course and set a precedent.

Proposition 131, passed by voters in 2022, requires candidates for governor in 2026 to choose a running

mate who could become their lieutenant governor in 2027. And though that feels far off to some, members of Arizona’s political community are already weighing their options.

The lieutenant governor would not only be the governor’s deputy, but could also serve as the governor’s

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CAPITOL TIMES Q&A
Charles Lucking:
Appointee gets to the point

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CLEAN-ENERGY INVESTMENTS IN ARIZONA FUELING ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

New federal investments, fueled by recently passed infrastructure and climate laws, have empowered Arizona and private industry to trail-blaze transformative new programs and projects to combat climate change, reduce carbon emissions, and rapidly accelerate the transition toward a clean-energy economy. While we are living in a time of unprecedented investment opportunities, we must continue to deploy and leverage their full potential to mitigate the worst impacts of climate change while continuing to fuel our economy with sustainable investments.



DAN STELLAR
Arizona State Director
The Nature Conservancy



MAREN MAHONEY
Director
Governor's Office of Resiliency



STEVE ZYLSTRA
President & CEO
Arizona Technology Council

Thursday, October 10th
8:00 AM



Join host Steve Goldstein for this informative discussion! It's FREE to attend.



STEVE GOLDSTEIN
Panel Host



Questions? Contact Sandy Mitchell at smitchell@azcapitoltimes.com or call 602-889-7113

CAPITOL QUOTES

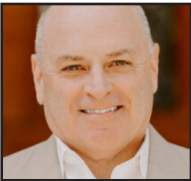
"I think that politicians too often use abortion as a political football. It needs to be taken out of politics and put in the hands of women and their doctors, the ones who know what is needed."

Rep. Judy Schwiebert, D-Phoenix, on her support for Proposition 139, the Right to Abortion Initiative.



"They're inconsequential because the Republicans are in charge and it's the worst performing Congress in decades, if not a hundred years."

Congressman Raúl Grijalva on why his absences from Congress since Feb. 15 following his cancer diagnosis could be worse.



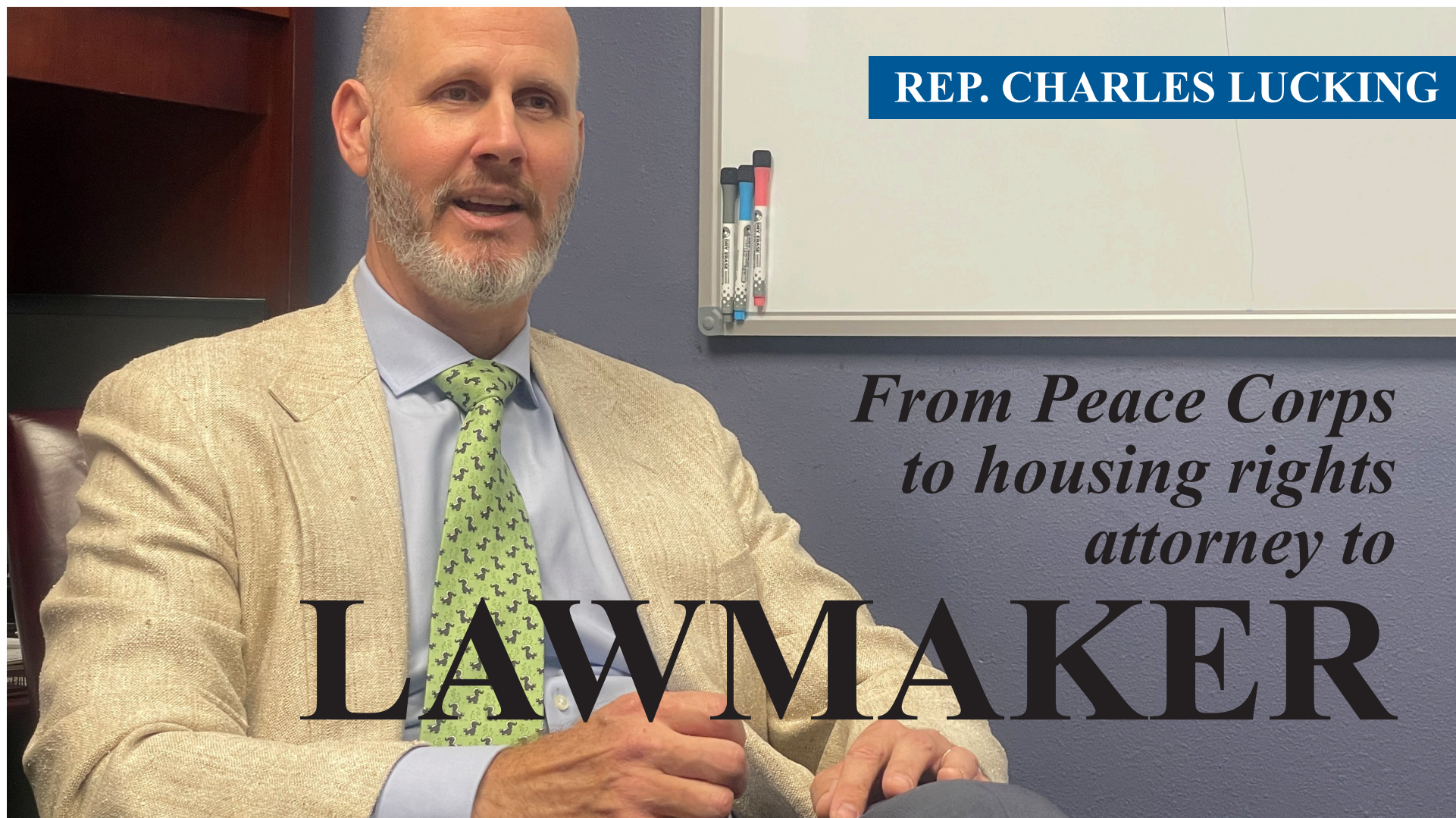
"It's all fun cocktail parlor conversation, but it can't manifest itself in any reality until probably after the next legislative session."

Chuck Coughlin, a Republican consultant, on why speculation about the first candidates for Arizona's new Lieutenant Governor position is premature.



"I don't think all voters can take it anymore. It will just collapse, and they'll stop voting, and that would be a nightmare."

Arizona Republican Party Chair Gina Swoboda on the growing number of voters whose proof of citizenship is not verified due to an error.



The Democratic caucus in the Arizona House of Representatives has seen seven new members this year following a slew of resignations from elected caucus members. Rep. Charles Lucking, D-Phoenix, was appointed to the House in February and spoke about his experience as an appointee to the Legislature in a recent interview with the Arizona Capitol Times.

BY JAKOB THORINGTON, jthorington@stateaffairs.com

The Democratic caucus in the Arizona House of Representatives has seen seven new members this year following a slew of resignations from elected caucus members. Rep. Charles Lucking, D-Phoenix, was appointed to the House in February and spoke about his experience as an appointee to the Legislature in a recent interview with the Arizona Capitol Times.

The questions and answers have been edited lightly for style and clarity.

How would you describe your experience at the Legislature?

One of the most interesting things I've ever done in my entire life and I've done a lot of really interesting things. I served in the Peace Corps. I've had jobs where I just went in cold and the drinking from a fire hose thing is not new to me. But this has been one of the most challenging but also just one of the most exhilarating and fun things I've ever done in my life. Incredibly difficult, but also very fulfilling.

What made you decide you wanted to seek an appointment?

I am a housing rights attorney, and I was working with Community Legal Services, which is our free, nonprofit law firm here in town. Our eviction laws are ancient and broken. I was thinking well, maybe I'll run for the Legislature and work on changing our eviction laws in 2026 or 2028. In LD5, both of our representatives resigned their seats. When the second

one became available, I'm like, well, I could wait, or I could throw my hat in the ring now and do some work on housing and eviction right now because it's an emergency. So I gave it a go. There was a point where my legislative district had no representation (in the House).

What was the learning curve like as an appointed representative?

It was crossover week when I was appointed. I know there was one day we voted on like 140 bills. We were there late every single day. It spilled over into the following week, and I really had to figure out quickly how to adequately understand like 100 bills for the next day. One of the things that was different from my expectations was thinking I'll have the opportunity to read every single bill that I vote on. But if you're going to be voting on 100 bills or 140 bills in one day, there's just no physical way anyone could do that. I really had to figure out very quickly what the resources were that I had and what the processes were that other representatives in similar situations were using. I really like being thrown into the deep end and having to learn how to swim really quick. It's a situation that I've grown to love. After a couple weeks, I knew how to be functional and figured it out fairly quickly.

What else was a surprise for you?

The most pleasant surprise was the quantity and quality of resources that we have available to us as

legislators, and I'm specifically talking about our policy advisers. We have a team of people who are just absolutely dynamite. If it's 10 p.m. and you're reading a bill and you don't know what the language is really getting at, we have people who are experts on it. They will usually know the answers to any question you have and if not, they will do the digging and do the research to get you the information you need. I didn't realize that sort of support system existed for legislators.

What was your favorite moment of the session?

When we repealed the 1864 abortion ban, I was really proud that I was able to play a part in that. I was also really pleased that some of the bills that will alleviate our housing emergency were able to get passed, but there was one thing that didn't really make any news. It was pretty small but I think ultimately it will end up saving lives. There was a piece of legislation that came before the Military Affairs and Public Safety Committee, and it was essentially a bill that would allow first responders from our neighboring states to cross the border to address emergencies in Arizona. In committee, I voted against it because the language was not dialed in, and I thought that it could potentially be really problematic but I liked the idea. I voiced my thoughts and my concerns with it and then I had several phone calls with the sponsor and the people who were working on it to get the definitions and intent dialed in.

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COURT BURIES FINDING JUSTICES ERRED IN WEARING ROBES AT RELIGIOUS FUNCTION

the opinion – effectively shielding it from public view and preventing it from manifesting in the state’s ethics canon.

The Supreme Court’s explicit ability to withdraw an opinion is new. In August, the court adopted an emergency rule allowing it to review a formal advisory opinion from the Judicial Ethics Advisory Committee before it becomes final.

April Elliot, staff director of the Judicial Ethics Advisory Committee, said, “It certainly expands the court’s options. They can give it a thumbs up, they can give it a thumbs down, they can modify it themselves, or they can kick it back with very specific guidance. Some of that was probably available now under the inherent authority of the court umbrella, but this at least spells it out.”

The Judicial Ethics Advisory Committee is a committee of the Supreme Court convened to issue advisory opinions based on the Code of Judicial Conduct and the Code of Conduct for Judicial Employees. The committee is separate and apart from the Commission on Judicial Conduct, which acts and investigates complaints against judicial officers.

Per the rule establishing the committee, a judge, candidate for judicial office, a judicial employee, a member of the advisory committee, a court or an agency charged with judicial administration can request an opinion, though requests “must relate to the inquirer’s own prospective conduct.”

On Jan. 23, Justices William Montgomery and Kathryn King, and Court of Appeals judges Daniel Kiley and Randall Howe, attended the Red Mass in Phoenix.

Photos posted by the Arizona Catholic Sun and the St. Thomas More Society shows King and Montgomery at the lectern in their robes. Per the St. Thomas More Society, King gave the first reading, and Montgomery led attorneys in renewing their oath of admission to the State Bar of Arizona.

On Jan. 24, the ethics committee received a request to look at the ethical constructions of wearing an official judicial robe to a religious service and fulfilling “a special role at the Red Mass, such as giving a reading of scripture or asking for prayer intentions, while wearing their robes.”

Any request to the committee is made confidential per court rules.



Justice Kathryn King

According to documents obtained by the Arizona Capitol Times, the ultimately unpublished opinion followed “multiple inquiries” from judicial officers.

After receiving a request, committee members decide whether to resolve it formally, with a written published opinion, or informally by a letter or other communication. A majority of the committee must vote to go forward with a formal opinion, and the question must then be circulated for comment.

The Judicial Ethics Advisory Committee posed the question for comment in February and returned a formal opinion in June.

“No,” the opinion read. “A judge is free to attend a religious service and fulfill a special role at that service in his or her personal capacity. But because the robe is a symbol of the exercise of the duties of judicial office, the robe should not be worn during religious services.”

The committee clarified that the opinion did not restrict a judge’s ability to attend and fully participate in Red Mass, or any religious service or ceremony, but did delineate a judge’s attendance or participation would be in a personal capacity, not a professional one.

The committee cemented the conclusion in three rules. The first speaks to promoting confidence in the judiciary, holding “a judge shall act at all times in a manner that promotes public confidence in the independence, integrity, and impartiality of the judiciary, and shall avoid impropriety and the appearance of impropriety.”

Another rule bars any indication

or impression that any person or organization is in a position to influence a judge. A third cited rule notes a judge may engage in extrajudicial activities, but when doing so, a judge shall not “participate in activities that would appear to a reasonable person to undermine the judge’s independence, integrity, or impartiality or demean the judicial office.”

The opinion further referenced a “hardline rule,” promulgated in an earlier ethics opinion, which barred judges from adorning their robes with a rainbow pin or other symbol and held the judicial robe “powerfully and unmistakably invokes the prestige of judicial office.”

They noted, too, judges do not typically wear a robe while engaging in extrajudicial activities, like grocery shopping or attending weekly religious services.

In turning back to the Red Mass, the committee noted, though the service does pertain to the law and legal system, “at its core, it is a religious service where participants seek Providential guidance for the year ahead.”

“While judges have a constitutional right to express their religious or other beliefs, the robe is the uniform of judicial office, and there is a need for the judiciary to ensure that it remains independent and impartial from any religious, political, or other external influences and to be perceived as being independent and impartial from any external influences,” the committee found.

“A judge’s robe is emblematic of the office they hold, and when worn, the public perceives judges as engaged in their official duties. Thus, a judge may not wear a judicial robe to engage in a personal religious activity because such conduct can undermine the appearance of independence, integrity, and impartiality of the judiciary, and suggest a person or organization is in a position to influence the judge.”

The Ethics Committee returned their formal opinion on June 3. The same day, the administrative office of the courts petitioned for a rule change to provide for Supreme Court review before a formal advisory opinion becomes final.

On June 18, a majority of justices, with the exception of King and Montgomery, ordered a reconsideration. The Ethics Committee reaffirmed its decision on July 19.

Justices took up the 2024 Rules Agenda

on August 20 and adopted the proposed rule change providing the Supreme Court with final review on any ethics opinion.

On August 28, the same justices voted to withdraw the opinion entirely.

In alerting the Ethics Advisory Committee of the court’s decision, Justice Clint Bolick wrote to Elliot in an email, “If you get a chance to chat with JEAC members, please let them know that this was not a decision on the merits ... We were hoping the Committee would provide a more fulsome analysis and were disappointed that it did not. Hence, if the issue arises further, it will probably be in the context of a judicial ethics complaint.”

Elliot said prior to the rule change, the court withdrawing an opinion was an “anomaly,” but did not see it to be outside the powers of the state high court.

She noted when the Commission on Judicial Conduct finds a judge engaged in more severe misconduct, the commission must recommend sanctions to the state Supreme Court for the final say.

“The Supreme Court, under the judicial regulation scheme, they are the ultimate arbiter of the judicial regulation,” Elliot said. “As the highest court in the state, certainly, I’m not bothered by the fact that they have the ability to review an ethics opinion and have the authority to technically withdraw it. I can’t comment on what their motivations would be, but overall, I’m not really bothered by the fact that they have the authority to do it.”

In terms of the Red Mass opinion in particular, Elliot said “I suppose there can always be the impression that the Supreme Court may be attempting to dictate what a particular holding should read, but I didn’t get that impression.”

The justices are set to meet again in December to decide whether to adopt the new rule on a permanent basis.

As for opinions on the Red Mass, Elliot said she suspected the committee could see another round of inquiries come January, which could prompt the committee to contemplate the issue again.

“They could choose to issue another opinion, although I think it would be on the committee’s mind that they clearly couldn’t issue the same opinion,” Elliot said. “Because they know that would be shot down.”

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SPECULATION ON LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR CANDIDATES HAS BEGUN

chief of staff, the director of the Department of Administration or in any other position for which the governor has the power to make appointments. It's unclear how exactly Arizona's next governor will utilize the new position, but Kellie Rittershausen, executive director of the National Lieutenant Governors Association, said there are several other states that can serve as examples.

"The most successful relationship between a governor and lieutenant governor is one where there's mutual respect, frequent communication and utilizing your number two to the best and highest of their abilities," Rittershausen said.

Rittershausen said she thinks lieutenant governor is the "most diverse" office in state government because of how much the election process and duties vary between states.

"A lot of times you see the role of lieutenant governor grow over the years, based upon precedent that gets set by former governors and lieutenant governors," Rittershausen said.

That means candidates for governor will have to think not only about what they want to do in their role, but what they would want from their potential second-in-command. Arizona's political consultants say it's a bit too early to be thinking about the new gig, but some politicians already have their eye on the spot.

Anna Tovar, a current member of the Arizona

Corporation Commission and longtime Democratic lawmaker, told the Arizona Capitol Times last week that she is interested in joining Gov. Katie Hobbs on her ticket in 2026. Karrin Taylor Robson, a likely Republican candidate for governor, has had names like Kari Lake and Jack McCain attached to hers as potential running mates.

Hobbs' campaign did not directly respond to questions about whether it is thinking about running mates, and Robson has denied rumors that she's considering either Lake or McCain. Chuck Coughlin, a Republican consultant, is among those who thinks it's too early to speculate on what an executive ticket would look like, but said it is "something to contemplate."

Coughlin said the newness of the position makes for some interesting conversations about what a gubernatorial campaign in Arizona will look like with running mates added.

"That's going to be part of the campaign messaging, what is that job going to do, and what role do they play in partnership with the governor, and how does that partnership look?" Coughlin said. "And all of those questions are just really interesting to ponder."

Another question on Coughlin's mind is how Proposition 140, a ballot measure he and a bipartisan group are backing, could impact an executive ticket if it is approved by voters this

year. Prop. 140 would create open primaries where all candidates, regardless of political party, would appear on the same ballot. Coughlin said he wonders if an open primary like that might persuade gubernatorial candidates to choose a running mate from the opposite party.

However, asking these questions before this year's election contests are decided is jumping the gun, Coughlin said. The makeup of the state Legislature, the fate of the abortion ballot measure and even the presidential race could have impacts on 2026 campaigns in the state.

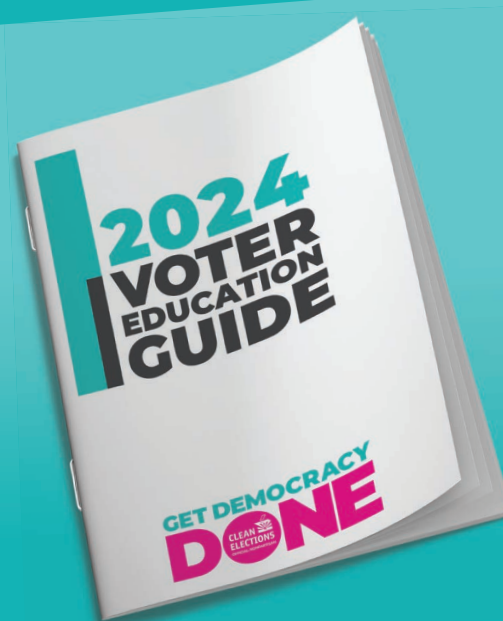
"It's all fun cocktail parlor conversation, but it can't manifest itself in any reality until probably after the next legislative session," Coughlin said.

Additionally, potential running mates cannot be identified until all candidates for governor from both parties have declared themselves. So far, the only sure candidate is Hobbs, who has committed to running for re-election. Robson is largely believed to be running on the Republican side, but has not yet officially announced her candidacy.

And whoever emerges as each party's chosen candidate won't have to officially declare their running mate until 60 days before the general election, which falls shortly after the state's primary election. So it's likely that Arizonans won't see the two executive tickets they will decide on until August 2026.

LIFE'S COMPLICATED. THIS ISN'T.

Clean Elections Voter Education Guide makes it easy to become an informed voter. In a quick read, learn nonpartisan information about the voting process and candidates. Look for it in the mail or read it online at azcleanelections.gov.



GUEST COMMENTARIES

Arizona's pro-abortion ballot measure goes too far

By Julia Payne Koon

This November, Arizonans will have the opportunity to vote on whether to enact a state constitutional amendment that would create a fundamental right to abortion. Activists in favor of the amendment claim that “voters clamored to sign” a petition to put the amendment on the ballot. But what does the ballot measure really mean?

To fully understand the measure, it's important to first understand Arizona's current abortion laws, which allow abortion for any reason up to 15 weeks gestation, and throughout pregnancy if the mother's life or physical health is in danger. In 2021 — the year before Arizona's 15-week law was passed — only 5.9% of all abortions in Arizona took place after 15 weeks. In other words, Arizona's current law allows the vast majority of elective abortions and any abortion necessary to save a woman's life.

So why does Arizona — a state that allows most abortions — need a constitutional amendment protecting them? The claim is that “lawmakers won't stop limiting abortion access.” But recent history doesn't support that argument. As amendment proponents acknowledge, Arizona lawmakers recently repealed an 1864 statute that would have prohibited abortion more broadly. It seems unlikely that Arizona lawmakers would be eager to reenact a similar statute anytime soon.



Regardless, what amendment proponents fail to acknowledge is that the Arizona ballot measure would go much further than “restoring” the status quo before the Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade.

Under that regime, states could regulate abortion so long as they did not unduly burden a woman's ultimate decision whether to bear a child. The legal standard in the proposed ballot measure is quite different. It states that the government may “not enact, adopt or enforce any

law, regulation, policy or practice that...denies, restricts or interferes” with the “fundamental right to abortion” “unless justified by a compelling state interest that is achieved by the least restrictive means.” In plain English, that means the government can't regulate abortion unless it can prove it has an exceedingly good reason and does so in the least restrictive way possible. That definitely goes further than Roe v. Wade did.

Conspicuously absent from this standard is any requirement that interference with abortion be “undue.” Instead, the language of the ballot measure seems to suggest that even minor interference with the abortion right triggers the highest legal scrutiny — even if the law in question doesn't prevent a single Arizona woman from having an abortion.

In practice, this standard — if enacted — could not only call into question Arizona's 15-week law, but all of Arizona's laws governing abortion, no matter how sensible. For instance, Arizona requires that only physicians may perform surgical abortions and that women receive specific informed consent information at least 24 hours before an abortion. Those laws could be challenged as too restrictive under the amendment.

This danger is not merely theoretical. Such lawsuits are

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Stop abortion bans from sending patient care backward

By Dr. Eve Shapiro and Dr. Paul Gordon

As a pediatrician and family physician, we've gotten to know many patients of all ages, and cared for their individual medical circumstances, including pregnancies that are unique to each patient.

We've encountered many cases in which an abortion was the right decision for a patient. We have cared for teens unprepared to have children and young women who were victims of rape. These patients should have the freedom to decide what's right for them. With the Arizona Abortion Access Act, they will have that freedom.

By passing this ballot measure, we can ensure that patients can get an abortion if they choose and that politicians won't be able to force patients to be pregnant.

Voting yes on the Arizona Abortion Access Act restores the protections Arizonans had under Roe v. Wade. We hear from our colleagues in other states that have extreme abortion bans who are rightly concerned for the physical and emotional health of patients, some of whom have had to be airlifted out of state because of serious pregnancy complications, or given birth in restrooms because they were turned away at hospitals, or forced to continue a pregnancy after rape or incest.

The Arizona Abortion Access Act will ensure abortion is accessible while also continuing to regulate abortion like any other health care procedure. Contrary to



disinformation about it, the act doesn't remove any safety precautions. Doctors take the health and safety of our patients extremely seriously, and would never support removing needed precautions.

The ballot initiative will also help preserve health care as a whole for Arizona. Abortion bans are shown to be driving doctors away. Arizona's abortion ban criminalizing doctors for doing their jobs will make this shortage far worse. By 2030, Arizona expects a

30% shortfall of OB/GYNs and a need to fill 2,000 positions for family physicians. We are on the frontlines of efforts to recruit doctors to work in Arizona. We talk to colleagues across Arizona and the nation about places that can attract doctors. While many factors and variables may entice doctors to a state or community, what just about every doctor, resident and medical student can agree on is that threatening to throw them in jail is no way to woo future physicians.

We don't blame doctors who are reluctant to come to a state that bans abortion. Prohibitions on standards of care in the practice of medicine violate fundamental principles of healing. By preventing doctors from using our medical skills and knowledge to provide the appropriate care for our patients, politicians and their abortion bans actually threaten to inflict harm on people. Telling doctors to sit on our hands while a patient experiences profound suffering because of complications during their pregnancy and then waiting until they are near death is simply unconscionable. Many of us became doctors to help people and alleviate suffering, not watch and wait for lawyers to tell us whether we can provide treatment for a patient who is bleeding heavily after their placenta ruptured.

As doctors, we know that one-size-fits-all remedies like

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GUEST COMMENTARIES

Safeguarding national security with practical PFAS regulation

By J.J. Martinez

Our country has made major environmental progress under the Biden-Harris administration. This is especially true as it relates to addressing exposure to a set of chemicals known as PFAS. The administration's leadership was instrumental in negotiating and passing the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, which appropriated over \$20 billion for detecting, treating, and reducing PFAS in public drinking water systems. President Biden and Vice President Harris also championed groundbreaking Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulations, including the establishment of the first national drinking water standard for PFAS, a ban on manufacturing inactive PFAS without EPA review, and the inclusion of additional PFAS into the Toxics Release Inventory. Their work will help safeguard the health and safety of communities and families right here in Arizona.

The EPA has a crucial responsibility to rigorously regulate PFAS as much as feasibly possible. The next step the agency is taking to discharge this responsibility is through a set of rules to develop effluent limit guidelines for PFAS. As the EPA produces these rules, it is vital that they balance the need to protect public health with the key role these substances play in U.S. manufacturing, particularly in relation to national security. New regulations must ensure continued access to PFAS for essential applications.

As a former law enforcement officer of 26 years for the



city of Phoenix, school safety resource officer, and a lifelong community advocate of affordable housing, job creation and the economy, I recognize that the safety and well-being of our communities always comes first. This commitment extends beyond the local level to the national stage, where it's crucial to ensure our defense agencies have access to the military technologies and resources needed to keep us safe.

Moreover, many of our country's critical defense

technologies rely on PFAS for their development. PFAS are found or used in the production of critical defense weapons and communication systems on which our armed services rely. This includes assault vehicles, helicopters, battle tanks, guided missiles, military personal protective equipment, and more. PFAS are particularly important to manufacturers here in Arizona, where companies like General Dynamics, Honeywell, Raytheon, and others use these compounds for their exceptional durability and resistance to heat, friction, and chemicals.

PFAS are also essential for assembling semiconductors, lithium-ion batteries, and other vital microcomponents central to our defense systems. Arizona alone has 155,000 semiconductor sector jobs that generate \$54 billion in economic output.

The EPA must take into account how essential PFAS are to our country's national security and preserve the ability of U.S. manufacturers to use these compounds responsibly. The Defense Department has explicitly stated "PFAS are critical to DoD mission success and readiness." Virtually eliminating access to this compound would hamper our ability to assemble defense weaponry and national security systems needed for communication, surveillance, and operational effectiveness. This would leave us more

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Arizona's top voters, seniors, want their care protected

By Dr. Heather Ross

In elections here in Arizona and across the country, seniors have consistently been a strong voter demographic with power to sway the polls. And they'll likely be a decisive force again in this year's election. As political candidates prepare for the home stretch of their races up and down the ballot, they need to ensure they're addressing the issues that motivate older populations to vote.

For years, Arizona's seniors have been a reliable voter bloc who consistently turn out to the polls in large numbers. In the 2020 presidential and 2022 midterm elections, nearly 80% of citizens above the age of 65 in Arizona voted. Their staunch commitment to voting ranks Arizona fourth in the nation for senior voter participation.

With pivotal races in Arizona showing close polling, seniors will have significant influence over final election results. Seniors are looking for leaders who will enhance community safety, help them remain at home as they age, and address rising prescription drug costs. Especially as seniors get older, having affordable access to reliable health care is more crucial than ever.

Many seniors here in Arizona and throughout the country are grappling to afford essential medications and other care services. That's where programs like Medicare Advantage come into play, which I've seen first-hand throughout my career as a nurse practitioner. With



wrap-around care and capped out-of-pocket expenses annually, Medicare Advantage provides high-quality health care access and peace of mind to millions of Americans, and it deserves to be protected. However, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) agency continues to make cuts to Medicare Advantage, threatening disruption to seniors' health coverage. Seniors are rightfully expecting that the program that protects them remains protected.

Changes to the Medicare Advantage program impact the more than 33 million Americans enrolled and could disproportionately harm our most vulnerable populations—particularly those in rural areas or those with chronic conditions who depend on the comprehensive, coordinated care that this program delivers. Seniors are increasingly worried that continuous cuts could lead to fewer options, higher out-of-pocket costs, and reduced access to their preferred providers. These worries trickle down to younger generations who worry about their parents and grandparents' health and financial security, particularly with inflation impacting those on fixed incomes.

With their health care at stake, seniors and their loved ones are paying close attention to the candidates who will work to protect care. And seniors don't just have a history of turning out to the polls in Arizona. In 2018 and 2022, voters over 65 across the country turned out at higher rates than any other age group, and they are likely to be a deciding factor again in 2024. Seniors account for a top voter demographic, and their voices need to be top-of-mind for Arizona's—and the nation's—political candidates as we approach the upcoming election.

Dr. Heather Ross is a nurse practitioner and ASU professor. She was previously a political director for the Arizona Nurses Association.

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REP. CHARLES LUCKING: FROM PEACE CORPS TO HOUSING RIGHTS ATTORNEY TO LAWMAKER

Is this something you would want to do again?

Absolutely. I just found this work so important because what we do here touches the lives of everybody. I feel like I have the capability of being a really good legislator. I found the work just incredibly interesting and gratifying and I feel like my colleagues value me as well, so I'm going to run again in 2026.

What about the Legislature needs to change?

Everybody knows there's a lack of communication between the two sides of the aisle that is causing dysfunction in our legislative process. I'm 47. I grew up in Arizona, and it really wasn't that long ago where Republicans and Democrats would work together to solve big issues. That's not really happening right now. I think that's something that's happening culturally both inside and outside of our political system, but I am making a personal effort to make sure that I'm being communicative and open to all the conversations with people from the other side of the aisle. The only way we're going to get past this kind of loggerhead is if, individually, all of our legislators and governmental leaders are making that effort on their own behalf, and that our leadership is being a model of overcoming this sort of block that's happening between the two sides of the political spectrum.

What was it like for you stepping into the shoes of former Reps. Amish Shah and Jennifer Longdon – two Democrats who had relatively successful tenures here?

Both of them were absolutely incredible leaders, not just for our legislative district, but for the state and continue to be in both of their current roles. They have been both great mentors for me and I have an immense amount of respect for them. I never felt like there was an expectation that I would be Dr. Shah or like anything like Dr. Shah. One of the things that's great about the Legislature is that every single person in there is a very unique individual who comes from a different background. I was delighted by how welcoming everybody in the caucus was and how helpful Dr. Shah and Jen Longdon were. I think what people care about, whether you're new or not, is that you're listening to your constituents. I 100% feel that to be a good leader and a good representative, the most

important thing is talking to all the different communities that are out there and, certainly Dr. Shah and Rep. Longdon really exemplified that as well.

There was a lot of fuss over how the budget was negotiated this year. What were your takeaways and what did you learn from that experience?

That was really difficult because we're in just an absolutely massive deficit and as a Democrat, there are a lot of social safety net programs that got caught in a big way. It's painful for me to see that, but it's going to be way more painful for the populations of Arizona that are going to feel the direct impact of those budget cuts. Housing is going to see a huge impact on that. Last year was a gigantic surplus and having the contrast between the way the surplus was handled and the deficit was handled was really eye-opening for all of us in the Legislature. My job as a legislator is to make intelligent and informed decisions about the vote to adequately represent the people in my district and the people of Arizona. The cuts being so drastic made it really hard but ultimately, I think we got to the best budget. I voted yes on it, but it was probably the most difficult vote I cast in the whole session.

What housing bills need to run over the next few years?

I have eight eviction bills that I'm writing right now with a few other of my Democrat legislators. I won't be here to carry them next year, but I have a colleague who will. With eviction, we can make huge changes that are very small and bipartisan bills that are going to have a massive effect on housing insecurity. Those need to be priority number one. Arizona had a little less than 100,000 evictions filed last year, which is about a 20-year high. We don't have rental assistance funded by the state. Most states have rental assistance in their state budget. Almost every state with the exception of three states has legal services funded by the state budget. We don't have that in Arizona. Our eviction systems are some of the worst in the nation. It's an absolute crisis right now. Our Landlord Tenant Act is approaching 50 years old. We are way behind and we need to catch up fast because this is something that is only going to get worse. The biggest immediate change we could make is extending the timeframe because you can go from being late on your rent to out on the street in a very short time in Arizona.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

STOP ABORTION BANS FROM SENDING PATIENT CARE BACKWARD

abortion bans are no remedy at all.

Every patient is different. They experience diseases and recovery differently. Conditions like cancer, arthritis and strokes affect different people in different ways. By that same principle, every pregnancy is

also different.

Whatever their circumstances, patients deserve the freedom to make their own decisions about their health care, with trusted medical professionals and proper safety precautions in place. The Arizona

Abortion Access Act will protect this freedom for our patients and for all Arizonans, and ensure their doctors can continue to do their jobs.

Dr. Eve Shapiro is a pediatrician in Tucson. Dr. Paul Gordon is a family physician in Tucson.

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SAFEGUARDING NATIONAL SECURITY WITH PRACTICAL PFAS REGULATION

vulnerable to foreign attacks and threaten our ability to safeguard our country. Given the imminent foreign threats we face, we cannot afford to compromise our nation's security by overly restricting access to PFAS.

In addition to hampering our ability to manufacture military technology in the U.S., EPA rules that all but ban domestic PFAS production would leave us vulnerable to China. Reducing our already limited domestic output would give us little choice but to import the compound from other countries in order to manufacture essential products. The geopolitical reality is that China dominates the global production of PFAS.

The good news is that there are alternatives the EPA can take that do not equate to a ban but still help reduce PFAS exposure. The agency can focus on promoting the use of PFAS alternatives whenever viable, as seen in sectors such as cosmetics, food packaging, among others. They could also enhance end-of-life management measures and reinforce emissions control standards.

It is important the EPA regulate PFAS exposure responsibly without imposing overly restrictive effluent limits. Instead, the agency should implement science-based regulations that protect the public while allowing manufacturers to use these compounds in producing critical defense systems essential for our national security.

J.J. Martinez is a former Phoenix police officer and is a community advocate.

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ARIZONA'S PRO-ABORTION BALLOT MEASURE GOES TOO FAR

already occurring in Michigan and Ohio, which enacted similar constitutional amendments in 2022 and 2023, respectively.

The proposed ballot measure is far more extreme than Arizona's current abortion laws. Current Arizona law represents a compromise — it allows most abortions but doesn't tie the Legislature's hands by preventing it from imposing commonsense regulations to protect women's health and safety and the dignity of unborn life. And it's precisely this sort of compromise that the Supreme Court made possible when it returned the issue of abortion to the people and their elected representatives.

Arizona voters should say no to enacting a constitutional amendment that will leave abortion unsafe and unfettered.

Julia Payne Koon is legal counsel with Alliance Defending Freedom and its Center for Life.

ELECTIONS

GOP SENATOR TRIES TO GET GREEN PARTY CANDIDATE IN TV DEBATE



Sen. Jake Hoffman, R-Queen Creek, speaks with media on Jan. 11, 2023. Hoffman recently attempted to get a Green Party candidate included in an upcoming televised debate for Arizona's Senate race. (Photo by Gage Skidmore)

BY HANNAH ELSMORE, helsmore@stateaffairs.com

A Freedom Caucus senator is still pressing to include a Green Party candidate in the U.S. Senate debate, which is just one week away.

The ongoing feud between Sen. Jake Hoffman, R-Queen Creek, and the Citizens Clean Elections Commission is centered around their decision to require that candidates receive at least 1% of the total ballots cast in all primaries to participate in general election debates.

The commission partnered with the Arizona Media Association for broadcasting during the election cycle, and the two decided on the rules that would govern the debate season.

The rule excluded Green Party candidate Eduardo Quintana from the U.S. Senate debate between candidates Kari Lake, a Republican, and Ruben Gallego, a Democrat. Quintana fell significantly short of the requirement, with about .02% of the total primary votes cast.

In a letter to the commission on Tuesday, Hoffman asked the Clean Elections Commission to submit their general election candidate qualifying rule to the Governor's Regulatory Review Council after he alleged that the commission "acted outside of its scope of authority by attempting to create legislative policy excluding candidates from participating in public debates."

Specifically, Hoffman said the "1% Debate Exclusion" rule was adopted by the commission without the opportunity for public comment that is required under the Arizona Administrative Procedures Act.

Executive Director Tom Collins said the commission had acted within its right to make a "discretionary decision" by enacting the rule.

He said the commission had "reasonably exercised its delegated discretion to limit who may participate in a particular debate based on threshold criteria determinations it deems necessary given the input it received from its contracted/broadcast consultants," in a letter sent to Hoffman on Sept. 12.

Collins compared Quintana to a Libertarian candidate who was allowed to participate in a CEC debate in 2022. Collins noted that Quintana had not registered a campaign committee with the Federal Elections Commission, going on to state that "it did not appear that he qualified as a 'candidate' for purposes of the Commission debate rule."

Hoffman called the CEC's letter a "because-I-said-so response completely devoid of legal merit."

"Arizona law only gives the Commission discretion to determine the manner in which debates are conducted," Hoffman said in the letter. "It does not, as your letter contends, give the Commission unfettered discretion to pick and choose which candidates get to participate. Arizona law is clear. The Commission is required to '[s]ponsor debates among candidates.'"

Hoffman said that the state's law regarding candidacy varies from the federal requirements.

"Under Arizona law, a person can be a candidate for a public office as long as they expend or receive a single cent," Hoffman said.

AMA President and CEO Chris Kline said the rule would not be changed ahead of the upcoming debate, in part, because most had already taken place and it would be unfair to the previous candidates to change the regulation.

"Our goal is to be as inclusive as possible, but also

to make sure that these debates are seen and engaged with by as many people as humanly possible, and it's a delicate, complicated balance to strike, which is why we try to create the lowest possible threshold," AMA president and CEO Chris Kline said. "We built this rule as part of the new partnership, as the best opportunity we could come up with to be fair and inclusive. We live in a world of changes every day, and we want to ensure that we continue to talk to lots of folks, and we are staying as nimble as humanly possible, but I don't have another solution."

Kline said he does not imagine the 1% threshold for general election debates lowering in the future, but noted that not having a solution now "doesn't mean that it's not a part of the conversation."

Despite Hoffman's request, all signs from the commission and AMA indicate that they plan to follow through with Lake and Gallego as the debate's sole participants.

"Clean Elections is reviewing Sen. Hoffman's lengthy letter," CEC said in a prepared statement. "Clean Elections will continue to engage with Sen. Hoffman regarding this issue and looks forward to a spirited debate next week."

Hoffman said the commission should have "nothing to fear from holding an open and public process for promulgating rules" if it views the rule as a good idea.

"Evading this process invites litigation, calls into question the independence of the Commission, and deprives Arizona citizens of the protections afforded under the APA," Hoffman said.

However, he has not said whether or not he plans to take further action if the rule is not scrapped ahead of the debate, which is scheduled for Oct. 9.

2024 ELECTION

DEMS TARGET GOP INCUMBENT IN LD4, PUSH ABORTION ISSUE

BY JAKOB THORINGTON, jthorington@stateaffairs.com



Rep. Matt Gress

A Republican House incumbent is defending his seat in a pivotal swing district where candidates' stance on abortion could be a deciding factor.

Only one Democrat ran for the House in Legislative District 4 in 2022, but this year Democratic candidates Kelli Butler and Karen Gresham are hoping to unseat Republican incumbent Rep. Matt Gress, R-Phoenix, by portraying him as an "extreme anti-abortion" candidate.

The Arizona Democratic Legislative Campaign Committee pointed out the conservative nonprofit lobbying group the Center for Arizona Policy endorsed Gress in a Sept. 26 news release. The group's mission statement is to "promote and defend the foundational values of life, marriage and family, and religious freedom."

"Voters have made it clear that they will be supporting candidates this November who will protect access to abortion," Elsa O'Callaghan, the Democratic group's executive director, said in the news release. "These endorsements show that Republican candidates are out of step with the voters of their districts, who believe in basic access to reproductive healthcare and protecting LGBTQ+ Arizonans."

Gress, a former budget director for former Republican Gov. Doug Ducey, is seeking his second term of office representing the swing district of LD4, which covers north Phoenix, Scottsdale and Paradise Valley.

But Gress was instrumental in repealing the state's 1864 abortion ban, which saw numerous efforts by GOP leadership to block the legislation from being heard on the House floor. He pushed for the legislation to receive a House vote numerous times with Democrats and lobbied other Republicans to vote in repealing the territorial era ban, calling it "unworkable" and not reflective of the values of most of the electorate.

His push to get the repeal bill heard on the floor cost him politically within his party. House Speaker Ben Toma, R-Peoria, removed him from the House Appropriations Committee after the bill got through the House. Some of his House Republican colleagues suggested Republicans single-shot LD4 with Gress' running mate Pamela Carter, a business owner who worked for former President Donald Trump's campaign in 2020.

"We only need 1 (Republican) in LD4. Single

shot Pam Carter," Rep. Jacqueline Parker, R-Mesa, wrote in an April 24 post on X after the abortion ban repeal bill made it through the House.

Carter previously ran for Scottsdale City Council in 2022, but lost by about 15% to Councilman Barry Graham. She is the sister of Lynda Carter, who played Wonder Woman in the 1970s, but Mother Jones reported on Sept. 13 that Lynda Carter is not endorsing her sister in her legislative race.

During Carter's campaign for Scottsdale City Council, she said she hoped the Legislature would not allow any abortions after Roe v. Wade was overturned.

GOP Consultant Chuck Coughlin, a resident of LD4, said Carter's stance on abortion could cost her a seat in the district where he believes its residents are seeking a moderate solution for abortion issues.

"There's people that are just frustrated with politics," Coughlin said. "The more that they see people trying to solve problems – AKA the abortion issue – I think the more that they're likely to support them."

The Arizona Independent Redistricting Commission gives Republicans a slight advantage in the district with a 3.4% vote spread. Voters in the district elected Sen. Christine Marsh, D-Phoenix, along with Gress and Laura Terech, in 2022.

Gress was the lead vote-getter in the 2022 LD4 House race, while Terech got just under 2% more votes than Republican Maria Syms. Gress finished with just more than 1% more votes than Terech.

Republicans have one-seat majorities in both the House and Senate. Tyler Montague, an East Valley Republican who helped lead the recall of former Senate President Russell Pearce, said any strategy from Republicans to unseat Gress would be unwise if they want to maintain control of the House.

"They would rather be in the minority and be pure than to have a bigger tent and win," Montague said. "They've always been that way before they called themselves the Freedom Caucus."

Running against the Republicans are former Rep. Kelli Butler and Madison Elementary School District Board member Karen Gresham. Democrats won one of the House seats in 2022 when former state Rep. Laura

Terech won in the 2022 general election. However, her departure from the Legislature in June leaves Democrats without an incumbent in the race.

Butler served three terms in the House from 2017-2024 and previously represented parts of the district. She is currently a member of the Maricopa County Community College District Governing Board.

Gresham has served on the Madison Elementary School District Governing Board since 2020, when she beat Gress by less than 1% of votes for a spot on the board.

Both Butler and Gresham oppose the state's current 15-week abortion ban and have called it an "arbitrary" number. Gress mostly supports the 15-week law but said he thinks some additional exceptions are needed.

Both Republican and Democratic slates ran uncontested during the primary, and Gress got the most votes among any candidate with 24,366 votes. Butler got the second-most with nearly 21,000 votes, while Carter got about 19,400 votes and Gresham got 18,900.

Gress has been a fundraising juggernaut among legislative candidates since his 2022 campaign. Pre-primary election campaign finance reports indicate Gress has led the candidates in campaign fundraising, with over \$400,000 raised before early July. Butler and Gresham nearly matched that, with a combined \$381,000 during the same time period. Pamela Carter raised about \$85,000.

"(Ducey), if nothing, was a prolific fundraiser with people who wanted to be supportive of him," Coughlin said. "Matt has positioned himself as the heir apparent to that goodwill and has had a lot of support from the former governor and the entire Ducey alumni network ... he's a progenitor of what Ducey was."

Coughlin also said Democratic fundraising efforts in the district have been strong, too. Terech's replacement in the Legislature is Rep. Eric Meyer, D-Paradise Valley, a former House minority leader who helped create the Arizona Democratic Legislative Campaign Committee with Gov. Katie Hobbs back when she was a legislator.

Butler and Gresham broke the record for second-quarter fundraising for a House candidate post-2002, when the state began collecting data online, according to a July 11 news release from the ADLCC.



Karen Gresham



Kelli Butler

2024 ELECTION



Republican Sen. Shownna Bolick, left, explains why she voted to repeal a territorial-era law that prohibited abortion except to save the life of the mother. Right: Rep. Judy Schwiebert, D-Phoenix, talks to volunteers on July 27, 2024, in Phoenix. (Capitol Media Services photo by Howard Fischer)

EDUCATION ADVOCATES CLASH IN PIVOTAL STATE SENATE RACE

BY HANNAH ELSMORE, helsmore@stateaffairs.com

Sen. Shownna Bolick, R-Phoenix, is facing her first election for the Legislative District 2 Senate seat since being appointed in 2022. Her opponent, Rep. Judy Schwiebert, D-Phoenix, said she was asked by her party to switch chambers and run for the seat, calling it a “major pick-up opportunity.”

The political opponents served alongside each other in the House in 2020 as representatives for what was then Legislative District 20.

The two will face off for the seat, which represents parts of northern Phoenix. The district is considered highly competitive, according to the Independent Redistricting Commission. The district had 34,364 Democrats and 44,748 Republicans registered to vote, as of the most recent report from the Secretary of State’s Office, giving the GOP an advantage ahead of the general election.

Democrats view the LD2 seat as a significant opportunity to shift the power in the chamber, according to Arizona Democratic Legislative Campaign Committee Communications Director Ashton Adams. Specifically, the party saw Schwiebert as the candidate that will “play a crucial role in flipping the Arizona State Senate.”

The chamber is currently led by a 16-14 Republican majority, so leadership of the Senate could hinge on the results of just one or two seats. Democrats have funneled high spending into competitive districts, with LD2 being considered among the few “flippable” districts.

“In discussions with the local legislative district leadership, it was clear there was an opportunity to provide the moderate, commonsense leadership this district deserves,” Adams said.

Schwiebert said that she eventually agreed to running in the Senate because she saw the seat as “uniquely vulnerable” because Bolick was appointed to the seat.

Bolick was selected by the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors to fill former Sen. Steve Kaiser’s vacancy in July of

2023. She previously served two terms in the House before unsuccessfully running for secretary of state in 2022.

In her short tenure in the Senate, she has played a prominent role in the chamber.

She garnered criticism from Republican colleagues during the 2024 legislative session for being one of the handful of GOP lawmakers who voted with Democrats to repeal the near-total ban on abortion. In explaining her vote, she shared her personal experiences with pregnancy, including needing a D&C for a non-viable pregnancy.

Bolick has focused on education issues both in the Legislature and outside of it. She served on the state’s Early Childhood Education and Health Board, the Arizona State Board of Education’s Academic Standards Development Committee, and was appointed as a representative to the Arizona Juvenile Justice Commission.

Schwiebert is a teacher who has similarly focused on education while in office.

She said the entire reason she felt motivated to run for the Legislature was to raise teacher’s salaries.

“We make teachers’ jobs very, very difficult here in Arizona, and as a result, one of three students no longer has a permanent, qualified teacher in their classroom,” Schwiebert said. “I thought that’s a disaster, not only for our children and their families, but it’s also a disaster for our economy.”

She said the first bill she would hope to pass, if elected, would be to raise the Aggregate Expenditure spending limit, which funds public schools. The current spending limit was set in 1980, which she called “outdated” and said it is causing a “crippling” impact on public school funding. She also supports extending Proposition 123 to further fund public schools.

Bolick also supports increased funding for schools and teachers, according to her campaign website. Notably, she believes teachers should be “rewarded for their

children’s academic excellence.”

“If students are excelling in their subject those teachers should receive additional compensation for their successes in their classroom,” her campaign website said.

Bolick is a school choice advocate who supports the Empowerment Scholarship Account program. In contrast, Schwiebert said she supports the program for certain students, particularly those with special needs, but that it needs more accountability.

The state’s Empowerment Scholarship Fund has turned into a “discount coupon for people who could already afford a private school,” Schwiebert said, noting a need for reform within the program.

While Bolick voted with Democrats to repeal the near-total abortion ban, she spoke in opposition of the Arizona Abortion Access Act, now Proposition 139, during the 2024 legislative session.

Schwiebert said she supports the proposition, which would primarily allow abortion up to fetal viability – with exceptions for the life and mental health of the mother.

“I think that politicians too often use abortion as a political football,” Schwiebert said. “It needs to be taken out of politics and put in the hands of women and their doctors, the ones who know what is needed, because there are so many different situations that could become complicated, and politicians shouldn’t have to know and be involved in all those decisions.”

Bolick’s campaign has highlighted border security as a top-line issue, alongside improving the state’s economy by creating a “a tax system that taxes all consumed income at the flattest rate.”

When it comes to border security, Schwiebert said she supports funding of increased law enforcement presence at ports of entry, but said it is “absolutely” the job of the federal government to regulate border policy.

However, she does not support Proposition

314, dubbed the Secure the Border Act, and said it was a “politically motivated unfunded mandate that does nothing to solve any of those problems.”

Schwiebert said that working across the aisle, especially when you represent a purple district, is pivotal.

“The important thing is making sure that we get the policy passed that’s good for Arizona, rather than bragging about who got credit for it,” Schwiebert said.

GOP consultant Chuck Coughlin said the election will likely be incredibly close. Bolick beat her primary opponent, Josh Barnett, by about 7% of votes, while Schwiebert ran unopposed.

Coughlin said the Senate seat is shaping up to be “Democrats’ number one pickup opportunity.”

In 2022, Kaiser won the race by just 2,960, or 3.6% of votes. Both parties have concentrated efforts on canvassing, highlighting the impact that each vote could have on the district’s election outcomes.

LD2 Democrat Chair Meg Patel said their district’s mission is to knock on as many doors as possible, describing it as a “must-flip district.”

She said education funding and housing affordability are the biggest priorities to LD2 Democrat voters.

“LD2 is the most purple district in the county, in the most purple county in the country,” Patel said.

The race for the Senate seat has brought it heavy funding from both parties. While Bolick has a significant voter registration advantage, Schwiebert was leading in campaign funding. Schwiebert had \$327,518 on hand, as of the pre-primary reporting period, while Bolick trailed behind with \$164,386 on hand.

Bolick did not respond to the Arizona Capitol Times’ request for an interview before our deadline.

LEGISLATURE

TUCSON CONGRESSMAN RAÚL GRIJALVA, SIDELINED BY CANCER SINCE FEBRUARY, SAYS NEXT TERM WILL BE HIS LAST

BY JACKSON SUTTER, *Cronkite News*

WASHINGTON — Tucson Congressman Raúl Grijalva, diagnosed with cancer early this year and absent from the U.S. Capitol since February, says his next term will be his last.

He's seeking a 12th term next month and on Monday, the 76-year-old Democrat told KOLD-TV in Tucson that he won't run again after that.

"Not that I'm abandoning what I do now. It's time for someone else. It's time for someone younger," he said.

Congressional records show that Grijalva hasn't cast a vote in the House since Feb. 15. He's missed more than 300 votes since then but told KOLD that it could have been worse.

"They're inconsequential because the Republicans are in charge and it's the worst performing Congress in decades, if not a hundred years," he told KOLD.

Monday's interview was his first since the cancer diagnosis.

In response to inquiries in recent weeks from Cronkite News, aides said Grijalva has been on the mend and was tending to his official duties from Arizona.

"Rep. Grijalva recently completed his chemotherapy and is pleased to report that he has responded very well to treatment. He is following the guidance of his medical team to limit travel, and he continues to work to serve his constituents and the district he proudly represents," said spokesman Jason Johnson.

Elected in 2002, Grijalva has served in Congress longer than any other Arizona lawmaker. He's the senior Democrat on the House Natural Resources Committee and in line to become chair if Democrats retake the majority.

In July, he became the second Democrat in Congress to call for President Joe Biden to drop his reelection bid.

"At first, the reaction was bad, bad in the sense of 'what are you doing to the party,' and then when it started to turn around, then it became some clairvoyant, I knew what was going to



Rep. Raúl Grijalva, D-Tucson, at a House Natural Resources Committee hearing on June 7, 2023. (File photo by Lillie Boudreaux-Cronkite News)

happen," said Grijalva to KOLD-TV.

Although he hasn't returned to Washington in months, he has conducted some public business.

During the August recess, he met with Interior Secretary Deb Haaland in Arizona. His office and the committee Democrats have issued numerous statements in his name.

"Beyond his engagement on the committee's legislative and oversight activities, Ranking Member Grijalva remains a leading voice on key issues, including climate change, environmental justice, tribal sovereignty and consultation, decolonization of U.S. insular areas, and the ongoing 'permitting reform' debate in Congress," said a committee aide, Lindsay Gressard.

Grijalva holds a safe Democratic seat and his prolonged absence isn't expected to keep him from winning reelection.

But his opponent has accused him of being AWOL, and speculated that his condition has been far worse than he's revealed.

"He should have come out and been honest with the constituents. He hasn't represented or voted since February, and I do not believe he's ever going to vote again," said Republican Daniel Butierez.

Grijalva's district runs from Tucson to Yuma. It covers most of the Arizona border with Mexico.

Court rules driving after consuming pot is OK – sometimes

In this Aug. 15, 2019 file photo, marijuana grows at an indoor cannabis farm in Gardena, Calif. The Arizona Court of Appeals ruled on Oct. 2 that driving with marijuana in your system isn't enough for the state to suspend someone's license. (AP Photo/Richard Vogel, File)

BY HOWARD FISCHER, *Capitol Media Services*

Simply driving with marijuana in your system isn't enough for the state to suspend someone's license, the Arizona Court of Appeals ruled Oct. 2.

The judges rejected arguments by the Motor Vehicle Division that a blood test showing metabolites of the drug is sufficient to prove a claim by the agency that there were grounds to believe that Aaron Kirsten was driving "under the influence" of the drug.

Appellate Judge Andrew Jacobs, appointed by Gov. Katie Hobbs and writing for the unanimous court, said when voters legalized marijuana for recreational use in 2020, they spelled out in Arizona law that the state may impose penalties on drivers – but only if it can first show that person is "impaired to even the slightest degree by marijuana."

"But that was not the case here," Jacobs said. "Instead, the state claims it can suspend Kirsten's privilege of driving for his prior use of marijuana, as evidenced by metabolites of cannabis in his blood, without any impairment."

In some ways, the ruling is not a surprise. The Arizona Supreme Court in 2014 barred the state from bringing criminal charges of driving while impaired against a medical marijuana user, absent proof that the person was affected by the drug.

This case is significant in two ways.

It is believed to be the first appellate court ruling on the issue since voters expanded the legal use of the drug from not just those with a doctor's recommendation – what was permitted in the 2010 voter-approved medical marijuana law – but to any adult.

And it also extends the protections for marijuana users not just against criminal charges of driving under the influence of the drug but protects them against this kind of administrative suspension of driving privileges by the Motor Vehicle Division, something the agency can do without getting court approval.

The whole issue comes down to a mix between medicine and politics.

According to court records, Sedona police stopped Kirsten in 2022 for speeding. The officer reported that he had bloodshot, watery eyes, slurred speech and was unsteady on his feet.

Kirsten refused to take a standardized field sobriety test, though a preliminary blood test showed a blood-alcohol content slightly above the 0.08% that is a presumption for intoxication. But an actual blood draw came back below that number.

A DPS forensic scientist also analyzed the blood for drugs and found some presence of THC, the psychoactive ingredient in marijuana.

At an administrative hearing, Kirsten testified he had not used marijuana within 24 hours of the traffic stop. And he had testimony from a chiropractor and nurse practitioner that THC – or at least the metabolites of the drug, meaning the chemicals produced when the body breaks it down – can stay in a person's system for weeks.

The hearing officer suspended Kirsten's driving privileges for 90 days, a decision that was upheld by Coconino County Superior Court Judge Stacey Lynn Krueger.

The politics of it all, according to Jacobs, come in with what voters enacted.

That statute, said the appellate judge, says Kirsten could be found guilty of driving with metabolites of marijuana in his blood only if there was a finding he was "also impaired to the slightest degree."

"This reinforces our understanding of the voters' intent, expressed through their enactment of Proposition 207, that unimpaired driving after consuming marijuana cannot be penalized," he wrote.

In this case, Jacobs said, the state was seeking to impose a penalty on Kirsten "for reason of his otherwise legal use of marijuana."

ELECTIONS

NUMBER OF VOTERS IMPACTED BY REGISTRATION ERROR SOARS TO 218,000

BY HOWARD FISCHER *Capitol Media Services*

A group already accusing counties of letting noncitizens register to vote has gone to court to get a list of the nearly 220,000 individuals – one of every 20 registered voters – identified as not having provided proof of citizenship.

And it wants the names before early voting starts this coming week.

Secretary of State Adrian Fontes is balking, contending, among other things, that providing a list of those affected will lead to harassment of the individuals. Fontes has repeatedly said those individuals are virtually certain to be legally registered. The only issue, he said, has been a newly discovered glitch in the verification process for those who obtained state driver licenses prior to 1996.

And Fontes already has an order from the Arizona Supreme Court saying all those affected are entitled to vote in the upcoming election. It is only later, ahead of future elections, that it will be necessary to ask them to provide proof of citizenship to comply with a 2004 voter-approved Arizona law.

But attorneys for Strong Communities Foundation of Arizona, which has been at the forefront of accusations of tainted voter rolls, says “no reasonable person” would have any good faith basis for concluding that the purpose is to harass or intimidate votes. And they contend that there’s a different reason Fontes and his office are balking at complying with what they say is a legitimate request for public records.

“Apparently, insulating themselves from embarrassment is more important to the defendants than following the law,” wrote attorney James Rogers. He is the senior counsel for American First Legal Foundation which has links to Republican interests.

“Over the last few weeks, the defendants have been forced to admit to staggering failures in their voter list maintenance procedures and to gross violations of their duties under Arizona’s Constitution and laws,” he continued. “The public has a right to know the full extent of their failures.”

The lawsuit is the latest twist in what has been a flurry of disclosures and accusations after Maricopa County Recorder Stephen Richer discovered last month that there was a problem with the system set up to verify citizenship through Motor Vehicle Division records.

A 1996 Arizona law requires proof of legal presence to get a driver’s license. And the 2004 law mandates proof of citizenship to register.

That 2004 law says anyone with a post-1996 license is presumed to have furnished that proof. But anyone registering to vote for the first time after 2004 or changing registration who has one of those pre-1996 licenses was supposed to be required to provide citizenship proof.

What happened, though, is that if someone with a pre-1996 license changed an address on a license after

1996 or got a duplicate, the coding reported to county election officials used that later revision date, showing – incorrectly – that it was a post-1996 license and, therefore, proof of citizenship had been provided.

There has been some finger pointing, with election officials blaming it on MVD and an aide to Gov. Katie Hobbs saying it is the fault of how the counties were making the inquiry.

In any event, the Supreme Court ruled that it would be wrong to deny those affected the right to vote a full ballot as the problem was not the fault of the voters. And the justices said it would be improper to try to remove them from the rolls so close to the election when they would have little time to dig up and provide citizenship proof and be entitled to “due process” before their voting rights could be curtailed.

“We are unwilling on these facts to disenfranchise voters en masse from participating in state contests,” wrote Chief Justice Ann Scott Timmer. “Doing so is not authorized by state law and would violate principles of due process.”

The alternative would have been to allow those people to vote only for president and members of Congress as federal law does not require citizenship proof for those races.

Fontes has said the list is still being compiled and verified. In fact, the numbers have bounced around, from an initial estimate of 300,000 to about 98,000 and, at last count, 217,187.

But Strong Communities wants a full list of those

affected, and now.

The “why” behind it is not stated in the lawsuit.

Instead, it says only that these are public records. And nothing in state law requires anyone seeking a record to provide a motive.

In a Sept. 24 letter, attorney Craig Morgan, who represents the Secretary of State’s Office, acknowledges that Arizona policy permits inspection of public records.

“But that policy has its limits and must be tempered when necessary to protect Arizonans,” he wrote to Jennifer Wright, one of the attorneys for Strong Communities. “At times, the need to provide carefully vetted and correct information to protect Arizonans from harassment and undue turmoil outweighs the public’s desire for general access to public records.”

In this case, Morgan said, the information sought is potentially unreliable and undergoing “rigorous evaluation and investigation.” The result, he said, would lead to chaos, confusion and harassment and create an “overwhelming administrative burden” on the agency just as it is preparing for the election.

Only after there is a final list of those actually affected will such records be available, Morgan said, and only after redacting personal identifying or otherwise confidential information.

But Morgan said that Fontes’ fears of what might happen by releasing this so-far-unverified list are more specific.

“Bad actors will weaponize this unreliable information to harass and intimidate voters and election officials,” the attorney said. “Voters who are erroneously challenged and harassed, but who are actually eligible to vote, will refrain from voting for fear of repercussions.”

Morgan said the information will be provided “at the soonest available time.” But he said that is not going to happen before the General Election, at least in part because of the burden on and lack of resources for the Secretary of State’s Office.

And Morgan repeated that the fact the Supreme Court will allow all those affected to vote a full ballot ensures they “will not be disenfranchised due to what amounts to an unintentional technical glitch.”

The challengers, in filing suit, were not convinced.

“The defendants have failed to satisfy – and, indeed, cannot satisfy – their burden to show that fulfilling the request poses an unreasonable administrative burden,” their lawyers state.

“It is obvious they have compiled the necessary information,” the legal complaint continued. “Otherwise, they would not have been able to publicly announce the number of voters affected by their failures to perform proper list maintenance.”



A voter casts their ballot in Phoenix, Nov. 1, 2022, but now roughly 218,000 voters’ proof of citizenship has been called into question. (AP Photo/Matt York)

HEALTH



The Arizona Department of Corrections Rehabilitation & Reentry and its health care provider, NaphCare, have been under legal scrutiny as it relates to prison care and conditions. (File photo by Jenna Aronson/Cronkite News)

MONITORING REPORTS SHOW PRISON HEALTH CARE PROVIDER NAPHCARE, ARIZONA STILL NONCOMPLIANT AFTER 2022 CASE

BY HAYDEN LARKIN
Cronkite News

In 2022, Judge Roslyn Silver, who was nominated by President Bill Clinton, ruled that Arizona was violating prisoner's rights by not providing proper care and that healthcare faults were causing preventable deaths in Arizona prisons. That case, *Jensen v. Thornell*, led to the Arizona Department of Corrections Rehabilitation & Reentry implementing changes to its quality of care up to bring it to constitutional standards via changes in staffing, higher quality physical care and access to mental health care.

However, the case didn't end the issues. In 2023, the Arizona district court issued another injunction to speed up the process, ordering the state to improve its health-care staffing, bring in additional physicians and hit benchmarks laid out by the court. In 2024, though, the problems remain.

"They're still enormous problems, and some of them haven't improved at all," said Donna Leone Hamm, director of Middle Ground Prison Reform, an Arizona-based nonprofit.

There is a stalemate between the Department of Corrections, provider NaphCare and Arizona courts. The court battle has raged for more than a decade. And in the eyes of the courts, only marginal improvements have been made.

Independent court monitor reports filed in July claim many objectives had not been met as of April. Noncompliant or overdue areas include hiring enough of psychiatric staff and additional physicians and having proper medical facilities to house no less than 200 patients. The reports also claim that the prison system is not compliant with rules about emergency response equipment, including automated external defibrillators or oxygen.

However, NaphCare claims to be making improvements on providing proper care and staffing to its facilities.

"NaphCare is continuing to innovate and enhance health-care services within Arizona prisons by enhancing the TechCare system, expanding staff training, increasing patient digital engagement, and developing specialized care programs like opioid treatment. These initiatives aim to elevate compliance and set national benchmarks in correctional health-care quality," a NaphCare spokesperson said in a statement.

The Corrections Department began a pilot project in July at a prison in Yuma to test staffing levels and establish a plan for future staffing. However, the department has also paused hiring until contract amendments with the state have been signed.

"One of the things that the court experts told Judge Silver in their report was that there's all this new staff that needed to be hired, and NaphCare would not do it for months because they said their contract with the state needed to be amended first before they would even try to recruit more staff," said Corene Kendrick, deputy director of the American Civil Liberties Union National Prison Project. "And so that's kind of a problem if the company isn't willing to do things that ADCRR is asking them to do and that are relevant to court orders until the amendment gets them."

The state, the department and NaphCare are still attempting to resolve all the issues by hiring staff and increasing inmates' access to care.

"The bottom line is, on a daily basis, day to day, people are suffering because of inadequate medical care," Hamm said.

"We've got cancer patients. I've got a guy who's had parasites all over his head and arms and in his eyes, and they've been ignoring the real problem for, he says, two years, and they still haven't scheduled him for a specialist. And you can only do so much with creams and ointments."

NaphCare has faced lawsuits across the country, including in Arizona. In Pima County, the company has been docked around \$3.1 million in financial penalties due to its failure to meet contractual obligations, according to reports from Arizona Luminaria. The 2022 per-capita deaths in the county jail were four times the national average, according to a report from the Tucson Sentinel.

"Right now, what the department is still doing is cooperating with the private health-care provider and saying, 'OK, here's what the court told us to do,'" Hamm said, noting that the fines NaphCare and other providers have received haven't seemed to speed up compliance. "They're making so much money in profits that it doesn't hurt them to be fined, they make a sufficient profit that being fined apparently doesn't harm their bottom line that much."

In a document from NaphCare, the company claimed to have "successfully staffed all critical aspects of patient care" and that "the NaphCare mental health team has implemented a process to complete comprehensive mental health evaluations at reception/intake for patients transitioning from jail to prison."

NaphCare has also implemented other programs to address Arizona health outcomes, such as a gender-identity director to provide care to transgender inmates and implementation of statewide Hepatitis C treatment, according to the document.

The Corrections Department has also reported some progress in its efforts to mitigate the issues the injunction addresses. The department declined to answer questions but, in its *Jensen Injunction Progress* report published in September, the department reported an increase in residential care units and employees. It has also lowered the number of people in maximum custody, Arizona's version of solitary confinement, which has been shown to put inmates at severe mental health risks. The department has lowered the number from 356 in January 2023 to 256 in August 2024.

A recent study from National Alliance on Mental Illness found that any time in solitary confinement increases risk of death in the first year of release, with suicide listed as the most common cause.

The court views these improvements as marginal. Silver said in March the conditions still remain "fundamentally lacking," and improvements must be made to avoid a third contempt of court case.

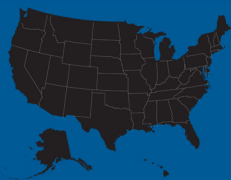
The ACLU and other groups have been calling for receivership to put the care of the prisoners under the court's authority rather than the Corrections Department.

"Over the years in the litigation, in this case, we have asked the judge to appoint a receiver to take over the management of delivery of health care to the incarcerated people in Arizona.

So far, she has not done so," Kendrick said. "It appears that her thinking to date on it has just been that she wanted to kind of see how things went for the department and their health-care vendors to implement the reforms."

FROM OTHER STATES

NEWS OF INTEREST FROM ACROSS THE NATION



Arkansas

STATE SUES YOUTUBE OVER MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS ISSUE

LITTLE ROCK — Arkansas has sued YouTube and its parent company Alphabet, saying the video-sharing platform is deliberately addictive and fueling a mental health crisis among youth.

Attorney General Tim Griffin’s office filed the lawsuit in state court. The lawsuit accuses the companies of violating the state’s deceptive trade practices and public nuisance laws. The suit claims the site has resulted in millions spent on mental health services. Google, which owns the video service, denied the lawsuit’s claims, calling its controls robust. The lawsuit is the latest move by states to highlight the impact of social media on youth mental health.

California

GOVERNOR VETOES BILL TO CREATE AI SAFETY MEASURES

SACRAMENTO — Gov. Gavin Newsom has vetoed a landmark bill aimed at establishing first-in-the-nation safety measures for large artificial intelligence models.

The decision is a major blow to efforts in the U.S. attempting to rein in the homegrown industry that is rapidly evolving with little oversight. The bill would have required companies to test their models and publicly disclose their safety protocols to reduce possible risks created by AI. Newsom said the bill could hinder AI innovation in California. Supporters say it would have set much-needed safety ground rules for large-scale AI models in the U.S. The country is already behind Europe in regulating AI to limit risks.

Idaho

JUDGE SETS EXPECTATIONS IN KILLING OF 4 UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

BOISE — A routine status hearing for a man accused of fatally stabbing four University of Idaho students drew a small crowd, with people beginning to line up outside the Boise courtroom five hours early in hopes of getting a seat.

It was the first hearing for Bryan Kohberger since the case was moved and a new judge was appointed. Judge Steven Hippler told attorneys on both sides that he expected them to remain civil and avoid theatrics despite the high stakes. Prosecutors have said they will seek the death penalty if Kohberger is convicted on the four murder charges.



Colorado

EFFORTS TO REPLACE FORESTS HIT BY WILDFIRES FACE OBSTACLES

BELLVUE — The U.S. is struggling to replant forests destroyed by increasingly destructive wildfires, with some areas unlikely to recover.

Researchers are studying which species are likely to survive — and where — as climate change makes it difficult or impossible for many forests to regrow. But researchers say the U.S. also lacks enough seed collection, nursery capacity to grow seedlings and workers trained to plant them on a scale needed to stem accelerating losses. The Forest Service says the biggest roadblock is the yearslong task of completing environmental and cultural assessments and preparing severely burned land for replanting.

Kansas

MAIL DELIVERY SUSPENDED AFTER ATTACK ON CARRIER

WICHITA — Mail delivery has been suspended in a Kansas neighborhood after two men assaulted a postal carrier who used pepper spray to stop large dogs from chasing him.

A U.S. Postal Service spokesperson says residents of the 41 affected addresses in Wichita now have to pick up their mail at the nearest post office. Police say that the worker ran back to his vehicle after using pepper spray on the dogs and that two men followed him for blocks. The attack left him with facial injuries, but postal officials say he will be OK.

Louisiana

ABORTION PILLS BECOME CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES – DOCTORS HAVE CONCERNS

BATON ROUGE — Louisiana is the first in the United States to categorize two widely used abortion-inducing pills as “controlled dangerous substances.”

Mifepristone and misoprostol are often referred to as abortion pills, but also treat miscarriages, induce labor and treat postpartum hemorrhaging. Doctors fear that the reclassification will cause delays in accessing the drugs in a state that already has one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the nation and has a near-total abortion ban. Opponents say the bill is another preventive measure for the crime of coerced abortion.

Minnesota

RARE HUMAN DEATH FROM RABIES REPORTED

MINNEAPOLIS — A Minnesota resident who came into contact with a bat in July died of rabies.

The state’s Department of Health announced the rabies death. The person’s death marks a rare occurrence. The U.S. Centers of Disease Control and Prevention says fewer than 10 people in the U.S. die from rabies each year. State health officials say the person was over the age of 65 and was exposed to a bat in western Minnesota in July. The state Department of Health is working to evaluate whether more people were exposed to the disease. But the agency says there is no ongoing risk to the public.

Montana

NATIVE AMERICANS ASK COURT FOR VOTING SITES

BILLINGS — Native Americans living on a remote Montana reservation have filed a lawsuit against state and county officials saying they don’t have enough places to vote in person.

It’s the latest chapter in a decades-long struggle by tribes in the United States seeking equal voting opportunities. The six members of the Fort Peck Indian Reservation want satellite voting offices in their communities for late registration or to vote before Election Day without making long drives to a county courthouse. The legal challenge comes five weeks before the presidential election. Montana’s ballot features a pivotal U.S. Senate race where the Republican candidate has made derogatory comments about Native Americans.

Nebraska

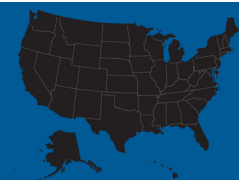
BUFFETT BUYS REST OF BERKSHIRE HATHAWAY’S UTILITIES, BUT...

OMAHA — Warren Buffett’s Berkshire Hathaway is buying the rest of its utility unit from the estate of a longtime board member who died three years ago, but it’s not clear exactly how much it will pay for the 8% stake.

Berkshire Hathaway Energy said in a regulatory filing that it will pay Walter Scott’s family \$2.4 billion cash and Berkshire will issue a number of Class B shares that are equal in value to 1.6 million shares of the utility business. Since the utility’s shares aren’t publicly traded, it’s hard to estimate the value of the deal, but a similar transaction two years ago with Buffett’s successor suggests the deal could be worth about \$7 billion.

FROM OTHER STATES

NEWS OF INTEREST FROM ACROSS THE NATION



Nevada

TOP ELECTION OFFICIAL IN KEY COUNTY TAKES STRESS LEAVE

RENO — The top election official in a northern Nevada county that is key to winning the presidential battleground state is taking a stress-related leave of absence with just over a month to go before Election Day.

The announcement about Washoe County interim Registrar of Voters Cari-Ann Burgess creates a sense of uncertainty about election operations in a county that has been under near-constant attack from election conspiracy theorists. It’s also the latest high-level change to roil the elections office after two previous registrars quit. County officials confirmed Burgess’ leave and said it was unclear if she would return before Election Day on Nov. 5.

New Mexico

ARMORER’S CONVICTION UPHeld IN FATAL SET SHOOTING BY ALEC BALDWIN

SANTA FE — A judge has rejected a request to throw out the conviction of a movie armorer in the fatal shooting of a cinematographer by Alec Baldwin on the set of the Western film “Rust.”

The request to dismiss the conviction or retry Hannah Gutierrez-Reed came in response to allegations that prosecutors failed to share evidence that might have been exculpatory. Judge Mary Marlowe Sommer said that the March 6 jury conviction should stand. She threw out the involuntary manslaughter case against Baldwin in early July. Baldwin was pointing a gun at cinematographer Halyna Hutchins during a rehearsal on a movie ranch in New Mexico in 2021 when the revolver went off, killing Hutchins and wounding the director.

North Dakota

HAND-COUNTING MEASURE EFFORT FIZZLES

BISMARCK — A proposed ballot initiative in North Dakota to require hand-counting of election ballots won’t advance.

Measure leader Lydia Gessele said that the group fell short of the required number of signatures for a public vote. They had a year to circulate petitions. The measure proposed numerous changes to election procedures, including banning voting machines, electronic processing devices and early voting, and restricting mail ballots, among other proposals. Supporters of former President Donald Trump, who has touted disproven claims of election fraud, cite hand counting as a trustworthy method, but critics say it delays results and is more error prone.

Oklahoma

FEDS WILL LAUNCH CIVIL RIGHTS REVIEW INTO 1921 RACE MASSACRE

OKLAHOMA CITY — The U.S. Department of Justice says it plans to launch a review and evaluation of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre.

The attack by a white mob on a thriving Black district is considered one of the worst single acts of violence against Black people in U.S. history. Assistant U.S. Attorney General for Civil Rights Kristen Clarke announced the first-ever review of the massacre by the DOJ. She says the agency plans to issue a public report detailing their findings and conclusions by the end of the year. An attorney for the last two known survivors of the massacre called the announcement a “joyous occasion.”

Oregon

DMV WAITED WEEKS TO TELL ELECTIONS OFFICIALS ABOUT REGISTRATION ERROR

SALEM — Oregon transportation authorities waited weeks to tell elections officials about an error that registered over 1,200 people to vote despite them not providing proof of U.S. citizenship.

Oregon Public Broadcasting reports that Oregon’s Driver & Motor Vehicle Services, or DMV, first learned of the improper registrations on August 1. But Oregon Secretary of State LaVonne Griffin-Valade says she only became aware of the error six weeks later. The mistake occurred in part because Oregon’s DMV automatically registers most people to vote when they obtain a license or ID. Elections officials say they removed over 1,200 voters from rolls due to the error.

South Dakota

JUDGE DISMISSES LAWSUIT OVER MINE SINKHOLES ENDANGERING HOMES

A judge has dismissed a lawsuit brought by dozens of neighbors in a subdivision beset by sinkholes caused by an old underground gypsum mine.

The plaintiffs plan to appeal to the state Supreme Court over whether a kind of legal protection for the state applies in the case. An attorney for the state referred The Associated Press to a spokesman for Gov. Kristi Noem, who didn’t immediately return a message seeking comment. The lawsuit was filed in 2020, the same year a giant sinkhole opened up in the Hideaway Hills neighborhood. More holes and sinkings have occurred since, endangering homes, roads and utilities.

Texas

STATE FAIR HAS NEW GUN BAN AFTER COURTS REJECT CHALLENGE

DALLAS — The State Fair of Texas is back with a new firearms ban.

The fair withstood weeks of pressure from Republicans and a lawsuit from the state’s attorney general. The gates opened last week at one of the largest state fairs in the country. Organizers put the ban in place following a shooting last year that injured three people. The fair had previously allowed attendees with valid handgun licenses to carry their weapon as long as it was concealed. Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton vowed that he’s not giving up, even after the state Supreme Court rejected a last-minute appeal from him.

Utah

COULD DOPING PROBE COST SALT LAKE CITY 2034 OLYMPICS?

PARK CITY — The International Olympic Committee president is hoping to ease worries that Salt Lake City could lose the 2034 Winter Olympics if organizers don’t fulfill an agreement to play peacemaker between anti-doping authorities.

Thomas Bach downplayed the gravity of a termination clause the IOC inserted into Salt Lake City’s host contract in July that threatens to pull the 2034 Games if the U.S. government does not respect “the supreme authority” of the World Anti-Doping Agency. Utah bid leaders have agreed to the IOC’s conditions to avoid delaying the much-anticipated announcement. The U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee chairman says he doesn’t agree with public perception that the late change to the host contract was a strong-arm tactic.

Wisconsin

CITY REPLACES BALLOT DROP BOX AFTER MAYOR CARTED IT AWAY

MADISON — An absentee ballot drop box that the mayor of a central Wisconsin city removed a week ago is back in place.

The Wausau city clerk said that the drop box was available outside City Hall “for residents to submit absentee ballots, payments, and other important city requests as was intended.” Mayor Doug Diny removed the drop box on Sept. 22 without consulting the clerk, who has the authority to make such boxes available under a Wisconsin Supreme Court ruling. Diny has said he wants the full Wausau City Council to discuss whether absentee ballot drop boxes should be used.

2024

LEADERS

OF THE

YEAR

IN PUBLIC POLICY



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2024 LEADERS OF THE YEAR



EDITOR’S NOTE

Each year, the Arizona Capitol Times recognizes the leaders who advance the interests of the people of Arizona. While this year’s awardees may not all share the same beliefs about how to move forward, they all have one common attribute: they work tirelessly and sincerely for the common good.

At the luncheon held last week at the Marriott Phoenix Airport, it was humbling to honor leaders who have so positively impacted Arizona. Incredibly, when speaking with awardees, they will invariably talk about how fortunate they are, typically crediting those they work with as the real leaders and difference makers. As you read through the profiles in these pages, I think you’ll be struck by the impact these leaders have had on the state. They successfully navigate the many challenges, persevere and collectively help Arizona continue to move forward. We are the fortunate beneficiaries of such rare talents.

Sincerely,
Gary Grado
Executive Editor

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2024 LEADERS OF THE YEAR



TERRY GODDARD

A conservative talk-show host once said on the air he admired the Democratic Attorney General at the time, Terry Goddard, because he loves Arizona. Goddard may not have known what the talk-show host said; he was too busy loving Arizona and serving as its top elected lawman. That love has shown through Goddard’s devotion to serving his state, community, and country in many ways, whether he was serving in the U.S. Navy, serving four terms as Phoenix’s governor, working six years to pass a ballot measure that changes campaign finance, or working 40 years to preserve a historic church in downtown Phoenix.

Born in Tucson, Goddard made his way to Phoenix because his dad, Gov. Sam Goddard, read that he was constitutionally required to live in the capital city. Goddard said in an interview with the Arizona Historical Society that he learned to serve his community at the dining room table, not only because of his father’s position, but his mother’s family was heavily involved in public service and one of his descendants was a close advisor of President Lincoln.

His first foray into politics was as a precinct committeeman in the late 1970s and in leading some petition drives. He said he was “fortunate against all odds” to get elected mayor of Phoenix in 1984, and he went on to serve four terms. Although his run for the governor’s office fell short, Goddard served as Arizona Attorney General from 2003 to 2011. Goddard wasn’t through with his public service, though. In 2022, he led the passage of Proposition 211, which requires public disclosure of anyone who has donated at least \$5,000 to influence candidate elections and ballot measures. Goddard is up for re-election for the Central Arizona Water Conservation District, the governing board of the Central Arizona Project, where he serves as president of the board. He has already served two, six-year terms on the board. Goddard said his father taught him he had an obligation to pay back and he used his talents for the state of Arizona. “I admired that and I thought maybe I could do some of the same,” Goddard said in an interview with the Arizona Historical Society.

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD



Congratulations, Andy Gaona!
2024 Leader of the Year in Public Policy

Your commitment to serving the people of Arizona has made a lasting impact on the legal landscape. We are grateful for your leadership, vision, and dedication to our communities.

2024 LEADERS OF THE YEAR



TAMMY MCLEOD
President and CEO >>
The Flinn Foundation

Tammy McLeod utilizes more than 20 years of leadership experience to help advance the Flinn Foundation’s goals of advancing Arizona’s bioscience sector, enhance undergraduate education and strengthen civic life and leadership in the state. As president, McLeod oversees all of the foundation’s grants, programs and operations. Prior to her appointment, she filled several executive positions for Arizona Public Service, the state’s largest electric utility, completing her tenure with the role of vice president for energy resource management. McLeod is proud to say that during her time as the firm’s chief customer officer, she developed a new company model for engaging in economic development and deployed new plans for community relations. McLeod, who joined Flinn Foundation in 2017, is also a member of the Arizona Community Foundation and The Nature Conservancy Arizona. Until her appointment with the Flinn Foundation, she also served as a member of Arizona’s Bioscience Roadmap Steering Committee.

ARTS AND CULTURE



ROBERT LINDE
General manager >>
Snowbowl Ski Resort

Many think of Arizona as purely desert and cactus, but Flagstaff hosts one of the state’s little-known gems: the Snowbowl Ski Resort. Under Robert Linde’s leadership, the resort has launched significant expansion projects designed to bring both economic benefit and world-class entertainment to Arizona. More than 700 people are employed annually at the Snowbowl, and the resort’s estimated economic impact to the area is \$58 million. Linde previously served as the Snowbowl’s assistant general manager, but his tenure goes all the way back to the slopes: Linde started in the ski industry as a Snowbowl ski instructor while attending Northern Arizona University as a business major. He also worked for the National Ski Area Association and was a board member of Northern Arizona Healthcare. Giving back to the community is important to Linde. The resort recently made a \$25,000 donation to a local homeless shelter, and it offers free firewood to surrounding Native tribes.

ARTS AND CULTURE



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2024 LEADERS OF THE YEAR



MITCH MENCHACA

Arts and Culture Director >>
City of Phoenix

Nestled in the heart of Arizona, Phoenix is a melting pot of cultures and communities. Since 2018, Arizona native Mitch Menchaca has worked to celebrate and honor the rich cultural history of the state. He oversees a \$4.7 million budget that provides grant funding, designs and builds public art throughout the city and supports local artists.

Menchaca is also the governor-appointed arts and culture co-chair for the Arizona Mexico Commission, and he serves on the boards of directors for the League of American Orchestras and Latinos Lead. In past years, he worked with the Association of California Symphony Orchestras, Americans for the Arts, Chorus America and the Arizona Commission on the Arts. Reaching beyond his immediate sphere, Menchaca even served as interim director of the Phoenix Public Library in 2024 during a leadership transition, and he continues to serve on the board of directors for the Phoenix Public Library Foundation.

ARTS AND CULTURE



MATTHEW KENNEY

Vice chair >>
Arizona Department
of Veterans' Services

As a founding partner of Echo Canyon Consulting and a specialist in political, advocacy and initiative campaigns, Matthew Kenney knows how to help those in leadership positions use their power for good. At his heart, however, Kenney most wants to help those who often have very little influence: military veterans.

An Army veteran of various operations in Iraq, Kenney serves on the board of the Arizona Department of Veterans' Services, the Arizona Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Western Maricopa Coalition. He is also the vice chairman of the Veterans Advisory Commission, which advises the governor on veteran affairs. Under Kenney's leadership, Vet the Vote, a national campaign encouraging veterans and military family members to become poll workers, has recruited more than 7,000 people statewide to staff the polls. Kenney has also volunteered with organizations such as Smokeless Vets, which works to empower veterans to quit smoking.

ASSOCIATIONS

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Valleywise
Health



Susie
Burn Survivor

CERTIFIED
EMERGENCY PARAMEDIC

2024 LEADERS OF THE YEAR



JOSH UMAR
Executive director >>
American Subcontractors
Association of Arizona

The American Subcontractors Association of Arizona dreams of a day when the subcontracting community is the most influential stakeholder in the construction industry. Leading the charge is Executive Director Josh Umar, who has led the organization since 2020 with a laser-like focus on the future of the industry. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, Umar led the association by revitalizing and revamping its programs while the world was on lockdown. He focused on education and workforce development efforts, specifically designing “Build Her Up,” a woman-led group aimed at fostering a welcoming environment for women in construction and other trades. Umar also started the ASAA Future Foundation, which helps to fund construction business education. Prior to working with the association, Umar launched the Addy Award-winning “Build Your Future Arizona” campaign. Based out of the Greater Phoenix Chamber Foundation, the campaign seeks to inspire the next generation of skilled tradespeople to enter the construction industry.

ASSOCIATIONS

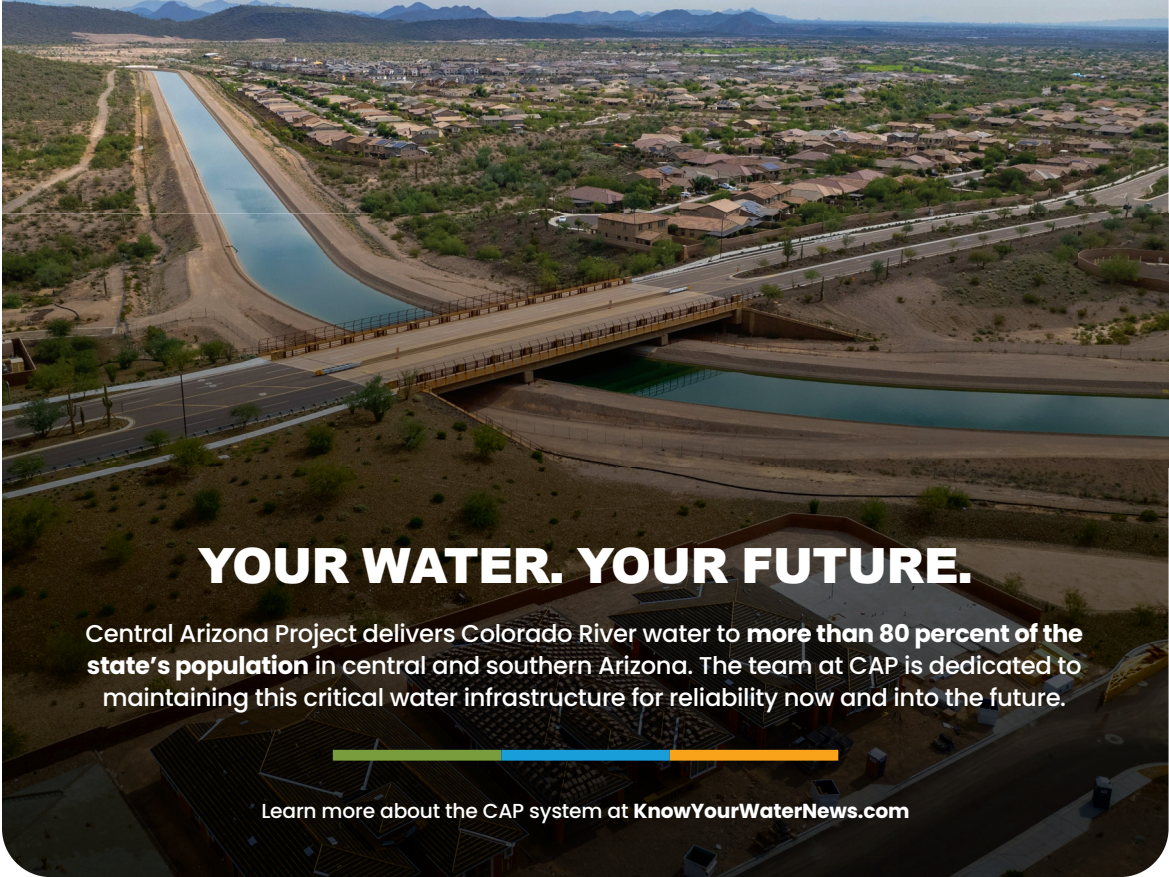


CHRISTOPHER KLINE
President and CEO >>
Arizona Media Association and
Arizona Local News Foundation

In the age of 24-hour news, the Arizona Media Association acts as the central hub and trade association for the state’s local radio, television, print and digital industry. Its leader, Christopher Kline, looks to “future-proof” local media and protect its critical role in society. The association, along with its newly created Arizona Local News Foundation, is the first of its kind in the nation. Kline took over the now-defunct Arizona Broadcasters Association and merged it with the Arizona Newspapers Association to create a single “big tent” media organization – and the rest is history. Association membership includes more than 350 radio and television stations, newspapers and digital operations. In fulfilling the association’s mission of connecting communities with local news and information, Kline has also worked to partner with other organizations. Through a partnership with the Clean Elections Commission, the association has produced 30 primary and general election congressional debates.

ASSOCIATIONS





YOUR WATER. YOUR FUTURE.

Central Arizona Project delivers Colorado River water to **more than 80 percent of the state’s population** in central and southern Arizona. The team at CAP is dedicated to maintaining this critical water infrastructure for reliability now and into the future.

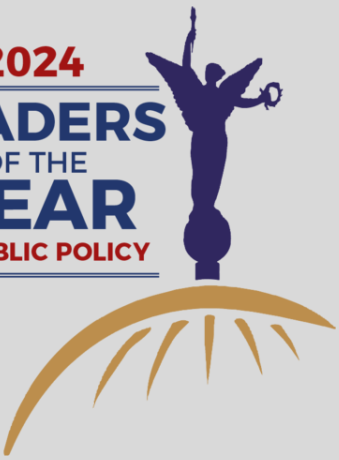
Learn more about the CAP system at [KnowYourWaterNews.com](https://www.knowyourwaternews.com)



CONGRATULATIONS

to CAWCD Board President **Terry Goddard** for being recognized with a **Lifetime Achievement Award** as part of the **Arizona Capitol Times 2024 Leaders of the Year.**

2024
LEADERS
OF THE
YEAR
IN PUBLIC POLICY

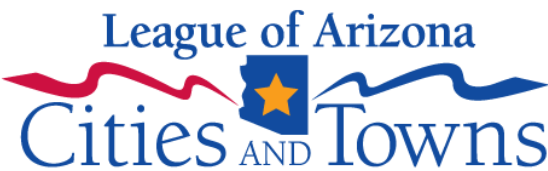


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2024 LEADERS OF THE YEAR



**MATTHEW
CONTORELLI**

Senior director of external affairs >>
Arizona Association of REALTORS®

Matthew Contorelli’s ability to forge relationships across all branches of government helped to pass the extension of Proposition 400 and repeal the state’s rental tax, two monumental legislative achievements. He joined the Arizona Association of REALTORS® and leads its lobbying team.

Prior to his time with the association, Contorelli worked with the Arizona Commerce Authority as the vice-president of government affairs, where he led legislative efforts to support business attraction, expansion and creation across Arizona. He also held positions with the Arizona Department of Juvenile Corrections and worked as a staff assistant for the Arizona State Senate.

Contorelli serves as a board member of the Arizona Tax Research Association and was previously a commissioner for the Arizona Commission on Appellate Court Appointments. He studied creative writing and political science at Chapman University.

ASSOCIATIONS



MIKE HUCKINS

Senior vice-president of public
affairs and IT operations >> Greater
Phoenix Chamber of Commerce

Mike Huckins knows that building a strong Arizona means championing business interests within the state. During his 10 years with the Greater Phoenix Chamber of Commerce, the largest chamber in Arizona, Huckins has worked closely with local leaders in advocating business and growth policies that cultivate a vibrant, healthy business community. His efforts have helped defeat bills that sought to put restrictive mandates on Arizona businesses, and he has worked to secure funding for top work-force priorities.

Huckins also worked for the Arizona House of Representatives in various capacities, including legislative research analyst and research staff director, culminating in an appointment as the Appropriations Committee analyst. In this role, he shepherded the annual state budget through the House committee and floor process.

Outside of his professional work, Huckins donates his time to many organizations, including the Valley of the Sun United Way Public Policy Committee, the Arizona Department of Public Safety’s Citizen Academy and the Phoenix City Council Citizens Transportation Commission.

ECONOMY

**EFFECTIVE AND ENGAGING
LEADERSHIP**

Julie Rees

**2024 LEADER OF THE YEAR
IN PUBLIC POLICY**

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NAVIGATING GOVERNMENT



2024 LEADERS OF THE YEAR



JULIE REES
Principal >>
Triadvocates, LLC

Though Triadvocates, LLC serves clients all over the state of Arizona, the company’s goal is to help each feel the focus of the entire team. Julie Rees works to lead the firm’s economic development practice, and in her decade of service has managed more than \$1 billion in Arizona projects. Rees has also worked extensively in housing-related policy, development and funding. She was an integral part of the coalition that advocated for the passage of the State Low Income Housing Tax Credit in 2021, which has served to create more than 1,000 affordable housing units in Arizona. She also worked to encourage substantial increases to the Arizona Housing Trust Fund in the 2023 legislative session. A proud member of her community, Rees serves with the Maricopa Community Colleges Foundation and Congressman Ruben Gallego’s Women’s Advisory Council. She is also an alumnus of the Luke Air Force Base Honorary Commander Program.

ECONOMY



JONATHAN SOTO ROBLES
Director >>
Libre Initiative

Arizona native Jonathan Soto Robles is passionate about the American Dream. As director of the Libre Initiative, he is dedicated to breaking barriers and providing everyone with the chance to succeed. In particular, Soto Robles focuses on changing the political landscape to encourage economic prosperity. He was instrumental in the passing of the Cottage Food Bill, otherwise known as the Tamale Bill, legislation designed to expand the kinds of home-cooked foods that could be legally sold. The bill was vital, he said, because small food businesses are not only sources of income, but also ways to share cultural heritage. The bill was initially vetoed, in spite of significant bipartisan backing, and the “Free the Tamale” movement ignited a groundswell of support that led to the bill’s eventual acceptance. Soto Robles has also worked on grassroots campaigns like that of U.S..Rep. Juan Ciscomani, a Tucson Republican. In every effort, he strives to help increase access to job opportunities, reduce burdensome regulations and honor worker freedom and choice.

ECONOMY

2024 Leader of the Year nominee in Arts and Culture



“At the Flinn Foundation, we believe that ensuring the financial and creative health of Arizona’s arts organizations improves our quality of life and will benefit future generations throughout Arizona.”

Tammy McLeod, Ph.D.
Flinn Foundation
President and CEO



2024 LEADERS OF THE YEAR



As technology continues to improve and expand, Dalton Abbitt believes that STEM education is vital to the future success of America, and that access to it should be a right, not a privilege. As chief political officer for GenTech, Abbitt lobbies at the state level for funding and investment into STEM initiatives, particularly for underserved areas across the state.

Abbitt has also spearheaded the launch of the GenTech Foundation, which aims to provide equitable education opportunities and address the need for a skilled STEM workforce. In the past year, the foundation partnered with the city of Phoenix to provide STEM programs to the Murphy School District, and Abbitt was also instrumental in growing GenTech’s KidsTech Program, which offers summer and after-school camps for the rising generation.

Prior to his work with GenTech, Abbitt served as a policy director and legislative coordinator for the Center for Arizona Policy.

EDUCATION



Empowering future generations is the goal of Junior Achievement of Arizona, and Katherine Cecala is leading the charge. A fourth-generation Arizonan, Cecala is passionate about supporting her neighbors through service and education. She oversees 9,000 volunteers who help 190,000 students learn financial literacy, career readiness and entrepreneurship. Cecala brings more than 25 years of leadership experience to her work, and her degrees in law and industrial engineering, as well as an MBA, give her a wide understanding of various fields.

Prior to joining Junior Achievement, Cecala served as chief operating officer at Valley of the Sun United Way and in executive roles at Mayo Clinic Arizona. She has also served on more than 40 nonprofit boards, including Mountain Park Health Center, the Arizona Humane Society, the Arizona Women’s Leadership Forum, the Arizona State Board for the Blind and Visually Impaired and the Upward Foundation.

EDUCATION

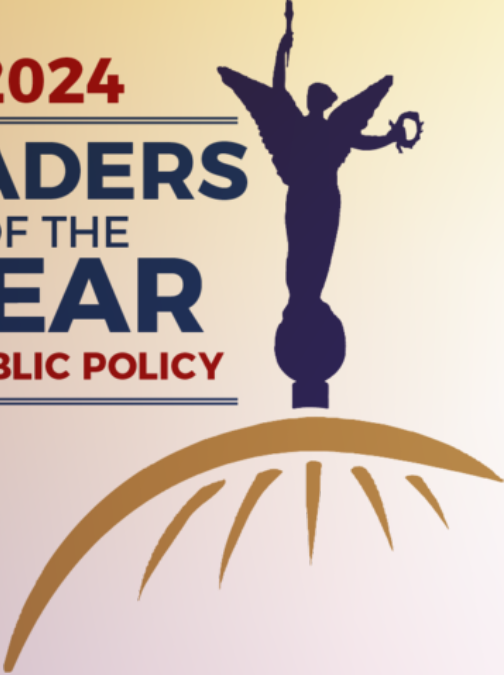


The League of Arizona Cities and Towns Congratulates
Executive Committee Member and Mayor of Yuma

Douglas Nicholls

Arizona Capitol Times
2024 Leader of the Year in Public Policy

2024
LEADERS
OF THE
YEAR
IN PUBLIC POLICY



2024 LEADERS OF THE YEAR



RUTH WYLIE

Co-director >>Center for
Science and the Imagination
at Arizona State University

Ruth Wylie wears a lot of hats, but they all tend to one conclusion: she’s a problem-solver.

At Arizona State University, Wylie leads interdisciplinary research projects that use theoretical and laboratory studies to answer real-world problems. She works as co-director of the university’s Center for Science and the Imagination, and she’s also an associate research professor and senior global futures scientist. Her focus in each sector centers on educational technology, futures thinking and applied imagination.

Wylie is also ardent about STEM education. From 2022 through 2024, she led the Arizona STEM Acceleration Project, which provided fellowships to more than 900 teachers across the state to help augment their classroom STEM lessons. She is currently working on a post-digital textbook project that will help students engage more fully in classroom instruction. Additionally, Wylie is partnering with World Bank to create an online game, EVOKE, designed to involve young people in social innovation and civic engagement.

EDUCATION



CHAD WILSON

Superintendent >>
East Valley Institute of Technology

In 2024 alone, the East Valley Institute of Technology served more than 7,300 high school and adult students from across the Valley. As that number continues to grow, Superintendent Chad Wilson is keeping the focus on educating today for a better tomorrow.

Since taking the reins, Wilson has worked to create opportunities for all within his reach. He negotiated with the institute’s governing board to reduce administrative costs and increase support for teachers and students, and he continually strives to strengthen partnerships with school districts and other community organizations. He was instrumental in the creation of HopeTech, a new 64-bed residential center on the main campus designed to offer safe housing and career training to students who age out of the foster care system.

Wilson has more than 25 years of experience in education, having been a middle school history teacher, principal and associate superintendent prior to his current position.

EDUCATION

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2024 LEADERS OF THE YEAR



MICHAEL CRAVENS

Advocacy and conservation director >> Arizona Wildlife Federation

Since 1923, the Arizona Wildlife Federation has been protecting the state’s wildlife, waters and wilderness. Michael Cravens, in his work as advocacy and conservation director, has been instrumental in advocating for Arizona’s public lands on the political front.

As part of his liaison work, Cravens recently helped organize the federation’s fifth annual Camo at the Capitol event. Hosted at the Wesley Bolin Plaza, the event brings sportspeople and lawmakers together to discuss conservation efforts, learn about current legislation relating to the outdoors and strengthen bipartisan relationships.

Cravens also serves as vice chair for Arizona Backcountry Hunters and Anglers. He has been certified by the nonprofit 2% for Conservation, which requires members to donate 1% of their time and 1% of their income to conservation efforts. Cravens also teaches and keeps up with outdoors-related news as host of the “Arizona Wildlife Federation Podcast,” where he highlights different aspects of the outdoors in Arizona.

ENVIRONMENT



TOM BUSCHATZKE

Director >> Arizona Department of Water Resources

Every day, the average Arizona resident uses about 146 gallons of water. With increasing population and recent drought conditions, the state requires a dab hand at managing this essential resource, and that’s where Tom Buschatzke comes in.

As director of the Arizona Department of Water Resources, Buschatzke is the state’s foremost negotiator with regards to the Colorado River and its usage. He is also chairman of the Arizona Water Banking Authority and co-chair of the Drought Inter-Agency Coordinating Council, and he represents Arizona in tribal water rights negotiations. Buschatzke also chairs the governor-appointed Water Augmentation Council, which looks at long-term water augmentation strategies to maintain water supply for the future.

Before his appointment as director, Buschatzke worked as assistant director of the department’s Water Planning Division. In that role, he oversaw various agency programs, including Assured and Adequate Water Supply, Colorado River Management and Planning and Data Management.

ENVIRONMENT

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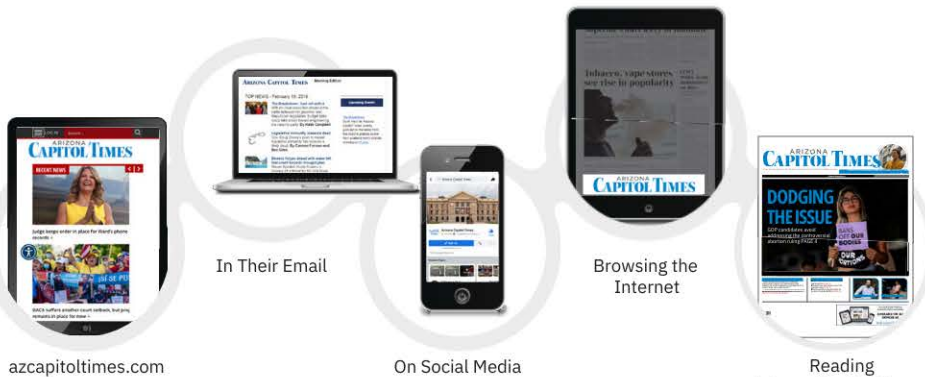
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2024 LEADERS OF THE YEAR



AUTUMN JOHNSON

Executive director >>
Arizona Solar Energy Industries
Association

As a state that enjoys near-constant sunshine, solar power has been a hot-button topic in Arizona discourse. In the thick of it is Autumn Johnson, a proud clean energy advocate and leader in the state’s solar industry.

Johnson began her career in social work, but after attending law school, she became passionate about the environment and energy use. Johnson’s work with the Arizona Solar Energy Industries Association focuses on moving away from fossil-fueled resources, transportation electrification and developing regulatory mechanisms for addressing climate change. She also serves as the association’s general counsel. Additionally, Johnson is the CEO of Tierra Strategy, a public interest policy advocacy and consulting firm.

Before taking her current position, Johnson served as the government affairs manager and energy policy analyst for Western Resource Advocates and as assistant director of the Energy Policy Institute at Boise State University. She also taught energy and agricultural law at the Concordia University School of Law.

ENVIRONMENT



CHUCK COUGHLIN

President and CEO >>
HighGround, Inc.

Chuck Coughlin has a hand in several industries and endeavors these days, but his main purpose weaves his accomplishments together – he wants to leave Arizona a better place than he found it.

Coughlin is particularly interested in electoral reform and making voting more accessible to all Arizonans. He founded HighGround, Inc., nearly 30 years ago as a consulting firm specializing in campaign management, and today the firm also helps clients who work in lobbying, affordable housing, primary election reform and groundwater management, among other sectors. As campaign treasurer for Proposition 140, the Make Elections Fair Act, Coughlin has managed more than \$7 million in donations and helped to garner 580,000 signatures to get the act on the November 2024 ballot. He’s well-known in the political sphere, having also worked in various capacities for Senator John McCain, Attorney General Grant Woods and Governors Fife Symington and Jan Brewer.

GOVERNMENT



DOUGLAS NICHOLLS

Mayor >>
City of Yuma

For the past 10 years, Mayor Douglas Nicholls has worked to bring quality employment, superior education and an enduring quality of life to the residents of Yuma.

During his tenure, Nicholls has created and spearheaded numerous initiatives designed to enhance the community. He serves as founder and chairman of 4FrontEd, an economic development-focused board of leaders from Arizona, California, Sonora and Baja California. Nicholls also works with Elevate Southwest, a nonprofit that seeks to increase educational opportunities and workplace training for Yuma County. He has advocated for water rights through a coalition of mayors whose smaller, rural jurisdictions rely on the Colorado River, and he currently serves as president of the League of Arizona Cities and Towns, a group that addresses key issues for all of the 91 cities and towns in the state.

A trained engineer, Nicholls is also president of Core Engineering Group.

GOVERNMENT



STEVE TITLA

Commissioner >>
Arizona Citizens Clean
Elections Commission

During his career of service, Steve Titla has worked tirelessly to give a voice to all Arizonans, particularly in the democratic process.

In his work as commissioner, Titla has ensured that voting tools, education materials and accessibility were available to rural and tribal communities throughout the state. He was instrumental in establishing a voter education media campaign in the Diné, Apache and Hopi languages. He also recently helped launch Captain Activate, the commission’s youth engagement program that aims to inspire young voters to take part in civic matters. Titla is also a partner at Titla & Parsi, where he practices law both in Arizona and on the San Carlos Apache Reservation. He has worked with the Navajo Nation Department of Justice and is past president of the National Native American Bar Association. Titla has also served in the United States Marine Corps and the Arizona National Guard.

GOVERNMENT

2024 LEADERS OF THE YEAR



MIKE TOWNSEND

Administrator >>
Public Safety Personnel
Retirement System

Overseeing the pension plans for nearly 60,000 active and re-tired first responders, corrections officers and elected officials is a daunting task, but one that Mike Townsend has captained ably since 2019.

With his background in accounting, Townsend has made what was once considered an underfunded pension plan into the fastest-growing of 200 large U.S. plans for two years running. Since his appointment, Arizona governments have paid down nearly \$5.4 billion in pension debts, resulting in significant taxpayer savings while ensuring retirement security to pension holders. He has worked to put in place policies for pension funding, actuarial assumptions, member contribution rates and cancer insurance plans to ensure the plan’s future success.

Townsend is a Flagstaff native and was formerly deputy manager of Coconino County, where he advised county supervisors on reducing pension debt. He also served on the board of trustees for the Arizona State Retirement System.

GOVERNMENT



SARAH WEBBER

Deputy director >>
Arizona State Parks and Trails

As deputy director of the Arizona State Parks and Trails, Sarah Webber has been instrumental in moving the agency, which manages more than 64,000 acres of land and 33 state parks, forward all across the state.

Since her appointment in 2022, Webber has organized an all-agency conference involving park employees statewide, and she coordinated the opening of Arizona’s newest state park, the Rockin’ River Ranch State Park in Camp Verde. She has worked closely with the Bureau of Land Management to oversee recreation permits impacting Lake Havasu State Park, and she recently oversaw the transfer of Arizona’s Office of Outdoor Recreation to her own office when the Arizona Office of Tourism could no longer support it.

Prior to this position, Webber served as chief operating officer for the state of Arizona and as deputy chief operating officer for Governor Doug Ducey. She also worked in the governor’s Office of Strategic Planning and Budgeting.

GOVERNMENT



SHANNON BUTLER

Executive director of
government affairs >>
CVS Health

Shannon Butler has been in the public-policy arena for almost 25 years, and a leader in health care public policy for most of that time. Whether she is overseeing government and regulatory relations for 19 states for CVS Health or serving on the Greater Phoenix Chamber’s Executive Committee, she is known as a strong coalition builder and a results-oriented leader in the health care and business community. It is her work building Arizonas for Affordable Health Care Coverage from the ground up that has caught the eye of her peers recently. “Shannon worked with her team to develop a completely new strategy regarding health care in Arizona,” said her nominator. “This consisted of framing an unapologetic position for how business interests were becoming subject to both populist and progressive viewpoints that favored short-term appeal versus long-term cost-containment and economic growth. She completely revamped everything – reframed their messaging, partnerships, association memberships and lobbyists.”

HEALTH CARE



LIA CHRISTIANSEN

Chief administrative officer >>
Valleywise Health

Lia Christiansen’s task on June 13, 2024, was monumental: Spearhead the move of 200 patients, including children and adults in intensive care from an aging hospital to a new, state-of-the-art facility. That was just one day in the process of opening the new 10-story Valleywise Health Medical Center, replacing the old county hospital, which has been the backbone of public health care in Maricopa County since 1971. Her nominator said Cheisrianse leads with a “we got this” attitude, instilling confidence in others that they can do it too.” She has been with Valleywise since 2021, and her nominator said the “extraordinarily complex project” of building and opening the new hospital involved identifying best practices, gathering input from multiple stakeholders and making timely decisions. “Lia employed her unique style – she communicates what is important, takes time to build relationships and expectations, and leads with respect for people at all levels.” She is also a board member of Central Arizona Shelter Services and she fosters dogs for the Arizona Humane Society.

HEALTH CARE

2024 LEADERS OF THE YEAR

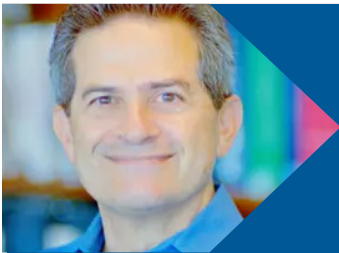


WILL HUMBLE

Executive director >>
Arizona Public Health Association

Whether the subject is opioids, school shootings, marijuana, Medicaid coverage or Covid, Will Humble is the go-to voice on public health. That’s not surprising since he served as the Arizona Department of Health Services executive director from 2009 to 2015, the health policy director at the University of Arizona for two years before taking the helm at the Arizona Public Health Association, where he has made the organization of 800 members more influential by informing evidence-based public health policy related to the Covid 19 pandemic. As the director of ADHS, Humble shepherded Arizona’s medical marijuana program into existence, and in his current role, he was often called upon by the media to comment on the Covid pandemic.

GOVERNMENT



DANIEL ADELMAN

Executive director >>
Arizona Center for Law
in the Public Interest

During his years in private law practice, Daniel Adelman fought for justice for individuals. In his current role, however, he can now give voice to scores of Arizonans who might otherwise go unheard. Adelman was named executive director of the Arizona Center for Law in the Public Interest in 2018, and he served on the center’s board of directors for more than 20 years prior. His tenure on the board included a multi-year appointment as president. During this time, Adelman has helped the center win major victories in education, health care, environmental protection and protecting voters’ rights. He has been particularly involved in a lawsuit that began in 2017 with several Arizona school districts suing for better funding for capital needs like buildings, buses and technology. Following his admittance to the State Bar of Arizona, Adelman clerked for Arizona Chief Justice Frank X. Gordon. He then became an associate for Phoenix law firm Lewis and Roca.

LAW



ANDY GAONA

Partner >>
Coppersmith Brockelman, PLC

Though not yet 40, Andy Gaona’s law experience reads more like that of someone who has been in the field for decades. He has already argued five high-profile cases before the Arizona Supreme Court, and he served as president of the board of directors of the Arizona Center for Law in the Public Interest from 2010 to 2021. Gaona has also worked on drafting legislation for several hot-button issues in Arizona, including Proposition 207, which legalized adult marijuana use, and this year’s Proposition 139, the Arizona Abortion Access Act. In 2023, he was appointed to the Arizona Supreme Court Task Force, which oversees reforms to the judicial performance review system. He was one of only three practicing attorneys nominated to the task force, the rest being current and retired judges. In addition, Gaona maintains a busy pro bono practice, helping clients from refugee farmers to high school athletes deal with systematic and legal issues.

LAW



STEVEN SCHARBONEAU

Attorney >>
Steven George Law

Steven Scharboneau believes the law exists to protect all citizens, and protecting individuals from unnecessary government intrusion is paramount. To that end, his work in criminal justice legislation reform has had quite the effect on the state as a whole. Recently, Scharboneau created and championed the Arizona Mugshot Act, which has changed how Arizona handles arrest photographs, with the intention of safeguarding the presumption of innocence in criminal cases. He also worked to reform Arizona transportation and motor vehicle laws. Scharboneau has also served extensively with Arizona Attorneys for Criminal Justice, which strives to protect the rights of the accused in court proceedings and educates the public about citizens’ rights and the criminal justice system. In 2020 and 2022, he received a Presidential Commendation from the association for his work in criminal justice reform, and he received its Vanguard Leadership Award in 2023.

LAW

2024 LEADERS OF THE YEAR



DARRELL KRIPLEAN

President >>
Phoenix Law Enforcement
Association

Darrell Kriplean started his career in law enforcement the way that most do – as a pair of boots on the ground in Phoenix. After 22 years as a patrol officer, he has risen to being the one who calls the shots as president of the Phoenix Law Enforcement Association.

In his current position, Kriplean represents more than 2,000 Phoenix police officers and detectives. The association’s mission is to promote the positive role of the police profession and to secure the rights and benefits of its members through relationships with all levels of government. Kriplean also heads PLEA Charities, founded in 2007, to help police officers in need as well as assist individuals and organizations within the communities they serve. The charity also honors fallen officers and supports their grieving families.

Prior to becoming president, Kriplean served as the association’s treasurer and chief negotiator. He negotiated several contracts for officers in the Phoenix Police Department, resulting in increases in pay and benefits for each.

LAW



DON JONGEWAARD

President >>
Professional Firefighters
of Arizona

In July, after more than 30 years of service with the Tempe Fire Medical Rescue Department, Don Jongewaard retired as a fire captain and paramedic. He won’t be resting on his laurels, however – he is continuing his service as president of the Professional Firefighters of Arizona.

Jongewaard is a long-time advocate for the rights and interests of his profession. He was elected president of Tempe Chapter 493 of the International Association of Firefighters in 2003, where he negotiated labor contracts and represented firefighters at local and national levels, and he later served as a task force member for the association’s financial corporation. He created and continues to chair the United Arizona Firefighters Health-care Trust, which provides stipends for retirees and health care for trust members who contribute funds in connection with their employment.

Prior to his appointment as president, Jongewaard served as executive vice president of the Professional Firefighters of Arizona.

LAW



ELIZABETH BURTON ORTIZ

Executive director >> Arizona
Prosecuting Attorneys Advisory Council

In a word, Elizabeth Burton Ortiz’ resume might be called “extensive.”

After finishing law school, Ortiz clerked for the Arizona Court of Appeals before joining the Maricopa County Attorney’s Office. During her 16 years of prosecuting cases, Ortiz served as a bureau chief in Juvenile, Pretrial, Charging, and Appeals. In 2009, she joined the Arizona Prosecuting Attorneys Advisory Council as the senior staff attorney, and she was later named executive director.

Ortiz is also co-chair of the Arizona Governor’s Commission to Prevent Intimate Partner and Gender-Based Violence and chair of the State Bar of Arizona Public Lawyers Executive Council. She is a board member of many associations, including the Arizona Forensic Science Academy, the National Association of Prosecutor Coordinators and the National District Attorneys Association. Ortiz also teaches extensively throughout the United States and Mexico on trial, advocacy and ethics topics for organizations such as the American Bar Association and the Alliance Partnership Program.

LAW



BRANDIE REINER

Executive director >>
National Association of
Social Workers, Arizona Chapter

When it comes to hotly-contested issues, Brandie Reiner isn’t afraid to get right in the thick of things.

As executive director of the Arizona chapter of the National Association of Social Workers, which tracks more than 1,000 bills annually at the legislative level, Reiner can frequently be found advocating for better mental and behavioral health practices, public policy and professional development. She has negotiated on issues related to workplace safety, immigration, police reform and telehealth services, among others. Her work with School Social Workers of Arizona was instrumental in blocking SB1189, a bill that only included funding for school counselors while excluding social workers.

Reiner also recently served on a national coalition to create a cohesive social work compact. Once adopted, the compact is slated to become a key component of future social work standards and legislation. Reiner has been active in helping a total of 22 states, in addition to Arizona, to pass similar legislation.

SOCIAL SERVICES

2024 LEADERS OF THE YEAR



EDDIE SISSONS
Executive director >>
Arizona Foundation for
Behavioral Health

With the last few decades of improved research, mental and behavioral health are two topics that find a way into much of the public dialogue. In her work in nonprofit and governmental settings, Eddie Sissons is uniquely equipped to be part of the conversation.

Sissons currently serves as executive director of the Arizona Foundation for Behavioral Health, which is part of the Arizona Behavioral Health Corporation. She is also a member of the governing body of the Arizona State Hospital. Before her current appointment, Sissons worked as a consultant for Research Advisory Services and as an executive consultant for Mental Health of Hawaii.

In 2012, Sissons was selected as a recipient of the Health and Science Leader Award from YWCA Maricopa County and earned a Community Advocacy Award from the Empowerment Systems, Inc. She received the Legacy Award from Arizona State University’s Center for Applied Behavioral Health Policy in 2013.

SOCIAL SERVICES



**ELENA REID
STEINBEISS**
Co-executive director >>
Foster 360

Each year in Arizona, 900 youth turn 18 and “age out” of the foster care system. Within two years, many experience homelessness, sex trafficking and post-traumatic stress disorder, and a significant portion end up in the criminal justice system. For Elena Reid Steinbeiss, this is simply unacceptable.

In her work with Foster360, where she began as a program manager and has served as co-director since 2022, Steinbeiss strives to provide what the agency calls “holistic wraparound services” that provide young adults ages 18-24 with essential life skills. Foster360, which operates under the Mesa United Way, offers trauma coaching as well as affordable housing and educational support.

Steinbeiss served in many roles with the Valley of the Sun YMCA before her current appointment, concluding as director of the Aging Out Foster Program.

SOCIAL SERVICES



SOMMER KNIGHT
Co-executive director >>
Foster 360

In her line of work, Sommer Knight has seen many solutions presented to help young adults ages 18-24 who leave the foster care system unprepared for life. The key to success, she believes, is taking each case one at a time.

Knight is co-director of Foster360, a program under the umbrella of the Mesa United Way, that seeks to equip young people who have “aged out” of the foster care program with educational, vocational and common life skills. They provide safe, affordable housing and trauma counseling while helping each resident with their individual needs. Knight is also a certified trauma and resiliency coach, making her adept to counsel with youths coming from a variety of difficult backgrounds.

Before joining Foster360, Knight worked with the Central Christian Church of Arizona as a children’s pastor and an associate campus pastor. She also worked in various roles for St. Joseph’s Hospital and Medical Center and SWAN Rehab.

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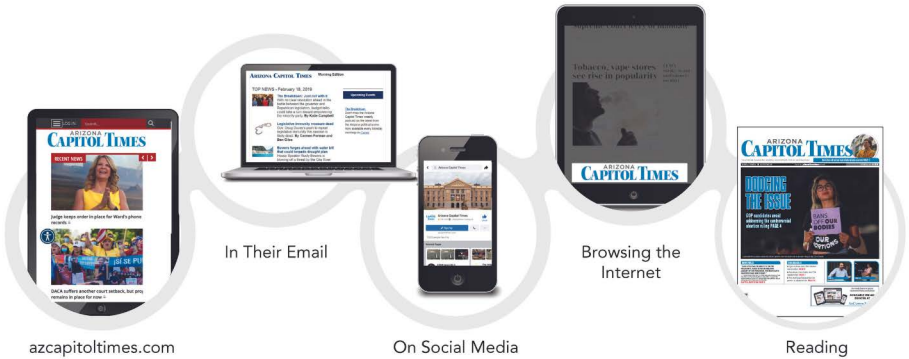
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2024 LEADERS OF THE YEAR



STEVE ZYLSTRA
President and CEO >>
Arizona Technology Council

Few in the technology industry can boast of a more wide-ranging and exhaustive resume than Steve Zylstra. Zylstra has served as president and CEO of the Arizona Technology Council since 2007. Before assuming his current role, he served as president and CEO of the Pittsburgh Technology Council, Catalyst Connection, the Pennsylvania NanoMaterials Commercialization Center and the Doyle Center for Manufacturing Technology. He was also president of the Pittsburgh Biomedical Development Corporation and director of business development for Simula Technologies, Inc., located in Phoenix. Zylstra co-founded the governor's Arizona Science and Technology Council, and he co-founded and served as chair of the Arizona Innovation Network.

Zylstra also lends his expertise to numerous boards and committees, including the Arizona Bioscience Roadmap Steering Committee, the Arizona Science Center Board of Trustees, the University of Arizona College of Engineering Dean's Advisory Board and the Center for the Future of Arizona Advisory Council.

TECHNOLOGY



JASON BAGLEY
Senior Director >>
U.S. State Government Affairs
Intel Corporation

Intel Corporation has had an Arizona presence since 1979, and its 9,700 Arizona employees make Chandler the second-largest Intel site in the company. Jason Bagley, in his role as senior director of state government affairs, is responsible for Intel's public policy initiatives all across the United States, and he works with government leaders at the local, state and federal levels. Bagley has also served in leadership roles on the boards of many area business associations, including the Greater Phoenix Economic Council, the Arizona Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Arizona Tax Research Association and the Public Policy Committee of the Arizona Technology Council. He currently chairs the Dignity Health East Valley Hospitals Community Board.

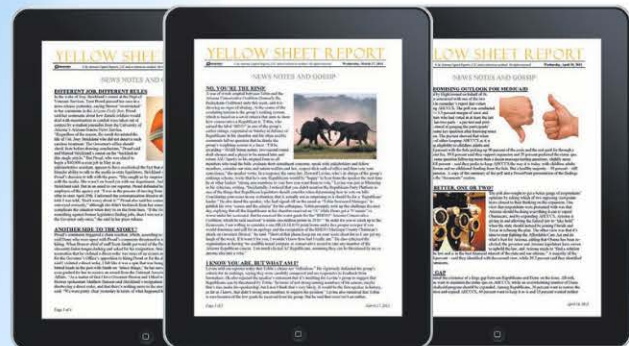
Bagley served for 13 years as a public affairs officer for the United States Army. During the initial deployment of U.S. forces into Bosnia, Bagley led a five-person public affairs team in support of Operation Joint Endeavor.

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2024 LEADERS OF THE YEAR

THE 2024 LEADERS OF THE YEAR IN FOCUS

The Arizona Capitol Times and State Affairs presented the 2024 Leaders of the Year on Sept. 24 at the Marriott Phoenix Airport hotel. Terry Goddard, at the podium, accepts his honor for Lifetime Achievement while attendees and other honorees mingled and networked before and after the event.





The American Heart Association urges Arizona to adopt policies that:



Cover ALL tobacco products.



Include ALL characterizing flavors, including mint and menthol.



Focus enforcement and penalties on tobacco retailers.



Require tobacco retail licenses (TRL) to ensure compliance with sales age and flavor laws.

GET INVOLVED:
heart.org/ArizonaTobaccoFreeFutures

