April 18, 2025

Arizona Capitol Times

Your Inside Source for Arizona Government, Politics and Business

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Meet the contenders for CD7 seat
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More funding for reduced-price school lunches?
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House approves chaplains in public schools
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"I'll say right now this bill amounts to legislative terrorism."

— Sen. Lauren Kuby, D-Tempe, on a Republican proposal to fund the Division of Developmental Disabilities by pulling funding from other social programs.

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Axon gets final approval for Scottsdale headquarters from Senate

BY JAMAR YOUNGER
jyounger@stateaffairs.com

Axon cleared a major hurdle when the Senate approved a bill on April 15 that would allow the company to build its global headquarters in Scottsdale without needing zoning approval from the voters.

However, if Gov. Katie Hobbs signs the bill into law, the company could still have to contend with a potential lawsuit from a group that opposed the project, as well as concerns from city residents that it won't honor concessions that were agreed upon before the Legislature passed the bill.

Senate Bill 1543 would require cities with populations between 200,000 and 500,000 to allow hotels and multifamily residential housing to be built in areas zoned for light industrial use without

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REPUBLICANS HAVE A PLAN TO FUND ARIZONA'S DISABILITIES PROGRAMS



State Reps. David Livingston, R-Peoria, and Matt Gress, R-Phoenix, speaking with attendees on the floor of the Arizona House of Representatives on separate occasions. Both Republican lawmakers have blamed Gov. Katie Hobbs for the budget shortfall in Arizona's Division of Developmental Disabilities. (Gage Skidmore / Flickr)

But Democrats aren't happy with it

BY JAKOB THORINGTON AND JAMAR YOUNGER
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House and Senate Republicans at the Arizona Legislature advanced a bill that would provide $122 million of emergency funding to the Division of Developmental Disabilities, but the proposal is unpopular with Gov. Katie Hobbs, legislative Democrats and members of the developmentally disabled community.

There is little time for negotiations. DDD will run out of funds to pay caregivers by the end of April, which could leave tens of thousands of families who depend on services from the agency without state aid if a funding bill isn't signed.

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Daniel Adelman: The fight for Arizona's Constitution

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CAPITOL QUOTES



"If they leave, I guarantee you it will be very difficult to start building back that reputation."

— Sen. Vince Leach, R-Tucson, on the possibility of Axon, a major technology manufacturer for police, leaving Arizona if it is not allowed to construct a headquarters in Scottsdale.



"Nobody's going to be able to fill my father's shoes, and I'm not going to try. But I do stand on really broad shoulders, and I'm standing on my own two feet."

— Adelita Grijalva, confirming her bid to replace her father, the late-U.S. Rep. Raúl Grijalva, in the 7th Congressional District.



"What parents are wanting is more ethics, more discipline, and, I believe, more God in their schools."

— Rep. David Livingston, R-Peoria, on a bill to allow religious chaplains in public schools for student counseling.



"This legislation unnecessarily deprives Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program participants of their purchasing power and relegates them to a new underclass of grocery shoppers."

— Gov. Katie Hobbs on a bill she vetoed that would have banned the use of food stamps to purchase sodas.

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CAPITOL TIMES Q&A



DANIEL ADELMAN

THE FIGHT FOR ARIZONA'S CONSTITUTION

Daniel Adelman meets with Arizona Capitol Times reporter Kiera Riley in his office. (Kiera Riley / Arizona Capitol Times)

BY KIERA RILEY | *kriley@stateaffairs.com*

Daniel Adelman took up the helm at the Center for Law in the Public Interest in 2018. During his tenure, he led litigation to keep people housed during the pandemic, cut the Legislature's ability to sneak provisions into budget bills, ensured funding for vital school facilities, and, most recently, challenged a $15 million pork appropriation to the Prescott Rodeo. As he transitions out of his role, he hopes his successor shares his passion for leaving the law better than he found it.

What drew you to public accountability law?

The school work was actually what drew me to the center. I joined the board in 1994 — the same year that the center won the first case that declared the way Arizona was financing its public schools as unconstitutional. I used to run this camp for underprivileged kids, and I used to go to the schools to meet with parents of these kids, so we could assure them their kids will be safe and everything. (The schools) were horrible. We won that case, and the state ended up putting in over a billion dollars fixing and building schools. I went back to those same schools, and they were nice … and it just drew me to the power of impact litigation and forcing the state to obey the Constitution.

How has the state changed in terms of compliance and constitutionality?

In a lot of ways it really is worse than it's ever been.

Part of the reason that I really appreciate good journalism is people have to know what's really going on, and if all you get is your social media feed, or all you look at are reporters that are going to agree with you and feed you whatever, it is really easy to try to take away people's rights … I think that conspiracy-driven narrative is for real, and it's taken hold, not by any means with all of the legislators, but with a lot of them.

Republicans were in charge of both houses (when I started), but everything was very fact driven. And people choose which facts they think are most important, and that's fine, but it wasn't all just fake, and I think that's changed, and it's scary.

Has your approach changed at all now that conspiratorial thinking has gained more legitimacy?

It makes the law even more important, right? Because there's this narrative that we're increasing public school funding, and they're just wasting it all on administration. And if all you're doing is giving a press release, it's super easy to say stuff like that. When you go to court, you have to prove it with evidence. There is no evidence to support that in Arizona. Arizona spends less on administration than every other state … I feel like it's even more

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REPUBLICANS HAVE A PLAN TO FUND ARIZONA'S DISABILITIES PROGRAMS, BUT DEMOCRATS AREN'T HAPPY WITH IT

"If we do not complete that task, around May, all the DDD programs in the state of Arizona will shut down," said House Appropriations Committee Chairman Rep. David Livingston, R-Peoria. "I find that unacceptable."

The House and Senate Appropriations committees passed mirror bills intended to provide DDD with the funding it needs on April 14 in House Bill 2945 and Senate Bill 1734. Both measures passed on party line votes, and some House Republicans opposed the bill they heard.

Hobbs and Democrats have called for a "clean" funding bill, but Republicans are moving legislation that would take tens of millions from the Housing Trust Fund and the Prescription Drug Rebate Fund to cover the $122 million.

The bill would appropriate:

- $38 million from the Housing Trust Fund.
- $10 million from the Arizona Commerce Authority Competes Fund
- $74 million from the Prescription Drug Rebate Fund

Although Senate Republicans voted in support of the measure, they acknowledged the bill wasn't a finished product and would need some amendments in order to keep their support once it reached the Committee of the Whole.

"This is not a perfect bill, not even close," said Sen. Carine Werner, R-Scottsdale. "But along with the money has to come guardrails to the policy."

Democrats in both chambers attempted to move an amendment that simply funded DDD through general fund dollars, but Republicans voted down those proposals.

"If we can get this supplemental clean bill done, then we can come to the table in the budget process and talk about reforms," said House Assistant Minority Leader Nancy Gutierrez.

Sen. Lauren Kuby, D-Tempe, proposed an amendment in the Senate hearing that would've provided a clean continuation of funding, but Republicans rejected the measure. Kuby later called the bill without the proposed amendment "veto bait" since it currently lacks Hobbs' support.

KEY POINTS

- **Republicans passed the $122 million funding bill on party lines**
- **Democrats oppose the funding as it pulls from other social programs**
- **The House Majority Whip seeks a bipartisan answer that Democrats support**

"I'll say right now this bill amounts to legislative terrorism," she said.

Rep. Matt Gress, R-Phoenix, called the funding proposal from Democrats and Hobbs "financially irresponsible," but a bipartisan amendment could be introduced later as the House and Senate continue to negotiate.

House Majority Whip Julie Willoughby, R-Chandler, offered an amendment to the House bill that had bipartisan support, but three late Republican additions prior to the start of the April 15 House Appropriations Committee hearing ensured the amendment wouldn't be included on the bill as it heads to the House floor. It failed in the committee 10-11.

"Today's committee proceedings felt predetermined with the makeup of the committee tilted to ensure the outcome of what we see before us right now," said Rep. Mariana Sandoval, D-Goodyear. "We had a real opportunity for bipartisan cooperation."

House Majority Leader Michael Carbone, R-Buckeye; and Reps. Selina Bliss, R-Prescott, and John Gillette, R-Kingman, are not normal members of the House Appropriations Committee. They were added as members shortly before the start of the hearing.

All three of them voted against Willoughby's amendment, which would have provided emergency funding.

The amendment would also remove required legislative approval of Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System waivers in favor of a review from the Joint Legislative Budget Committee. It would also remove language from the bill that instructs AHCCCS to submit a waiver request that caps the number of hours paid to parents in the program to 20 while keeping the 40-hour cap that both Hobbs and Republicans have suggested for the immediate future.

The GOP bill would require AHCCCS to request a waiver to reduce the number of hours parents can work as paid caregivers to a maximum of 20 hours per week. Willoughby's amendment cuts that language for a 40-hour weekly cap that Republicans and the governor already plan to implement by July 1.

Republicans have accused Hobbs of "unilaterally" expanding DDD through the Parents as Paid Caregivers program without approval from the Legislature. The program was introduced during the Covid pandemic and the Legislature didn't agree to using state dollars to fund it as federal funds have expired.

Without Willoughby's amendment, the bill also proposes to give the legislature oversight over Medicaid waiver requests from AHCCCS and the monthly payments for health care service providers.

Willoughby was in tears by the end of the Appropriations Committee hearing as she apologized to a packed committee room full of DDD families. She voted against the bill without her amendment.

"I choose you as my hill to die on," Willoughby said to the families. "I'm sorry this is happening to you."

Her seatmate, Rep. Jeff Weninger, R-Chandler, also voted against the bill without Willoughby's amendment. He accused both Republicans and Democrats of playing politics on the issue.

"This should be the last subject on everybody's minds to do that," Weninger said. "To our side and to the Governor's Office: Get in a damn room already. We've had months, and I'm not blaming one side nor the other. I just know they haven't met — either side."

Several members of the audience agreed with Weninger. More than 500 people signed as opposed to the bill on the Legislature's website compared to eight who signed to support it.

"This community is not OK with how you are handling this," said Michele Thorne, a parent and the executive director of the Care 4 the Caregivers organization that seeks to assist parents raising children with disabilities. "Lives are on the line here. This is not just ESA funding for schools. This is critical care for disabled children. Why are we doing this?"

Thorne and a number of other parents and caregivers held a press conference after the Senate Appropriations hearing to express disappointment over a number of provisions in the bills that they view as harmful to those with disabilities and their caregivers, including the proposal to reduce the Parents as Paid Caregivers Program from 40 hours to 20 hours per week.

"The passage of (SB1734) and (HB2945) from this committee moves us one step closer to policies threatening the most vulnerable Arizonans," said Brandi Coon, co-founder of the Raising Voices Coalition. "Children and adults with complex medical and behavioral needs, their families and the direct care system that supports them is hanging by a thread."

Coon and the rest of the group called on Republicans and Democrats to work with families and providers to amend the bills before the final legislation reaches Hobbs.

Livingston said he's tried to meet with Hobbs' staff, but has largely been ignored because the Governor's Office didn't believe the Senate Appropriations Committee would pass the DDD bill from himself and Sen12. John Kavanagh, R-Fountain Hills.

Hobbs' Chief of Staff Chad Campbell wrote in a post on X during the House hearing that Livingston told Hobbs' office through a third party that the bill would be "the best & only bill the Governor would get on DD funding."

"That isn't collaboration. That is a threat," Campbell wrote.

Livingston said he wanted to incorporate parts of Willoughby's amendment in a future floor amendment, but said the process is tricky because the lack of time to modify the bill has created a scenario where the House and Senate bills have to be identical as they go through each chamber.

"There isn't another way. There really isn't," Livingston said. "But the work's not done. The work is not close to being done."

"If we can get this supplemental clean bill done, then we can come to the table in the budget process and talk about reforms."

— House Assistant Minority Leader Nancy Gutierrez

CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

AXON GETS FINAL APPROVAL FOR SCOTTSDALE HEADQUARTERS FROM SENATE

needing an application that would require a public hearing.

The legislation was crafted to accommodate the company, which wants to build a sprawling headquarters near Loop 101 and Hayden Road. The campus would include 1,900 apartments and condominiums, a hotel and retail integrated into the company's headquarters. About 30% of the apartments would be allocated for workers.

Supporters of the bill said it was important to keep the company — and the jobs it promises to bring with the new headquarters — in Arizona.

The bill also drew staunch criticism from legislators who viewed it as "special legislation" that would circumvent the will of Scottsdale voters, who might not have a say in the zoning for the development.

Group opposes project, plans lawsuit

The Scottsdale City Council originally approved zoning for the project in November, but a group called Taxpayers Against Awful Apartment Zoning Exemptions collected signatures to send the measure to the ballot after some residents expressed opposition to the project.

Now that the bill has passed the Legislature, the group is planning to pursue legal action, said former Scottsdale City Councilmember Bob Littlefield, who serves as the group's chairman.

"Our lawyers believe this bill is grossly illegal and unconstitutional. It's a special interest bill designed just to make one company happy," Littlefield said. "It tramples on the rights of Scottsdale voters, so I think we can probably beat it in court."

Littlefield said a number of city officials, including his wife — city Councilwoman Kathy Littlefield — were scheduled to meet with senators before the vote but never had the opportunity.

"I think they know they're in the wrong and they're just ashamed to face us," Bob Littlefield said.

Bill divides lawmakers on both sides

Lawmakers on both sides of the aisle expressed strong sentiments about the bill during its final reading in the Senate on April 15.

"If they leave, I guarantee you it will be very difficult to start building back that reputation, a reputation we have built over the years, not only for having a great program to bring companies here, but our tax program and, yes, in fact, our school system," said Sen. Vince Leach, R-Tucson.

KEY POINTS

- **SB1543 would allow a massive multifamily residential headquarters for Axon**
- **The legislation has faced opposition from community organizations in Scottsdale**
- **Supporters say the economic impact from Axon will be substantial for Arizona**

Sen. Brian Fernandez, D-Yuma, said helping the company stay in Arizona would continue to spur economic growth and the creation of high paying jobs.

"It's about keeping high paying, future focused jobs right here, growing our economy and showing the world that Arizona is a place where innovation thrives," Fernandez said. "We should all want Axon to grow here because when Arizona companies lead, Arizona companies win."

Sen. John Kavanagh, R-Fountain Hills, referred to the bill as a form of voter suppression.

"An election has actually been called and has actually been scheduled," Kavanagh said. "A vote for this bill will cancel that election. That's not theoretical, that's actual. So this is voter suppression on steroids."

The issue reminded Sen. Lauren Kuby, D-Tempe, of the Arizona Coyotes' proposal to build a stadium and entertainment district when Kuby was a Tempe city councilwoman.

"It's not about apartments. It's not about how we grow our cities. It is about the will of the voters," Kuby said. "And how can we take away the expressed will of the Scottsdale voters who want to vote on this."

Homeowners association wants concessions honored

While the project has caused a division between groups and lawmakers, residents of a nearby neighborhood are concerned about a previous agreement to mitigate traffic and restrict the height of buildings in the area.

> ***"It's about keeping high paying, future focused jobs right here, growing our economy and showing the world that Arizona is a place where innovation thrives."***
>
> — Sen. Brian Fernandez, D-Yuma.

The residents of Scottsdale Stonebrook II had previously worked with city officials to ensure that road realignments would direct traffic away from the neighborhood, as well as implement additional setbacks, berms and upgraded landscaping.

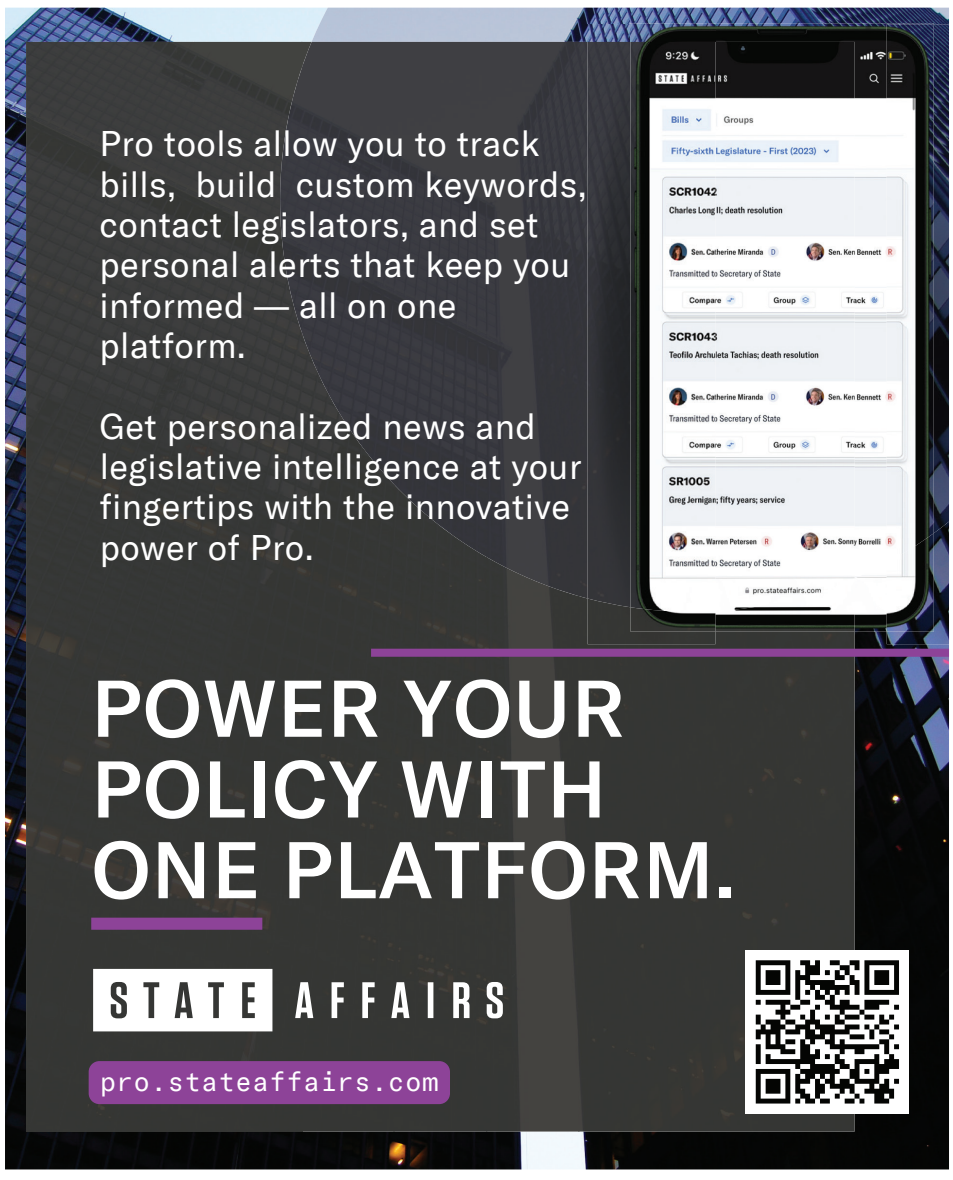
"So here we feel like we started this little brush fire that has turned into this forest fire, fanned by other interests that had nothing to do with us," said Susan McGarry, president of the Scottsdale Stonebrook II Homeowners Association. "So we started this little issue that has mushroomed into this big political football."

The Homeowners Association does not oppose Axon or its headquarters plan, and never took a formal position for or against the legislation, McGarry said.

"We hope Axon will honor the changes and concessions made to their development plan at the city level, many of which were made with our community in mind," she said in a text message statement after the Senate passed the bill. "They were good enhancements that can help buffer us from the campus while enhancing the development's appeal."

An Axon spokesman said earlier this week the company was focused on getting the bill passed and would revisit those concessions once the legislation and the actual campus proposal is finalized.

"Axon is very open to working with the neighbors. They've been doing it for years," said Axon spokesman David Leibowitz. "Everybody wants this project to be a win, not just for the company, but for the people who live nearby, for the city of Scottsdale, for the state of Arizona."



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DANIEL ADELMAN: THE FIGHT FOR ARIZONA'S CONSTITUTION

important with some of the battles between the different houses in the Legislature, or between the Legislature and the governor. There are times when you need a court and you need someone, like the reason.

The center does pro-bono work. Why is that important?

We advocate for people who otherwise would have no voice. We're litigating the rodeo case. The reason we're doing that case is the principle involved. There are these limitations in the Arizona Constitution. If the Legislature doesn't follow them, all kinds of bad things can happen. It's not just 'Does a rodeo get the money or not?' That isn't the point. The point is, do they have to comply with the Constitution? Two residents who are just people in Prescott are the ones (who) retained us. It's been a lot of work. They could never afford attorneys. Regular people could never afford that … The center, which is totally pro bono, it's just this huge tool that gives regular citizens the power to challenge the legality of what's going on.

How do your personal values lead you in the work you do?

Family is hugely important to me. I have wonderful kids who are all adults now, and all successful and in wonderful stuff. I'm making sure that I am a good husband and a good dad, but also a good lawyer trying to make the world a better place. My parents are and were people who devoted their whole lives to making the world a better place. My dad was in the Air Force and a professor, and my mom was a principal. It was just a big part of everything we did, that our job here is to make the world a better place … that's driven my whole career.

What are some of the concrete changes you've seen happen as a result of action the center has taken?

When we did the budget reconciliation bill case, like you hear about that, and you think that is like the most boring constitutional law, who cares? But it was at the height of Covid and the things that they were putting in what were supposed to be budget bills had these really far reaching health consequences, and this emergency physician came up to me and just said, "You have no no idea how many lives you saved by having the Supreme Court rule that those things were unconstitutional." A lot of doctors saved a lot of lives, not every lawyer gets to.

What parts of the cases you litigate stick with you?

A lot of the witnesses in the school finance case, after they would testify about how bad it was and how they've been trying to get help fixing a roof, or whatever. Well, after they testified and they were in the case, that roof that they've been trying to get fixed for eight years suddenly got fixed.

Once you have these people under oath, they're talking about what's really happening. This isn't somebody just saying something on social media. It's like they really have skin in the game. The most frustrating thing is the kids are the ones who suffer from this. The people who are most responsible will never suffer any of the bad consequences of their decisions, like to not fund the capital needs of public schools. The children who have no responsibility for causing the problems, they're the ones who suffer.

What are your next steps after the center?

This has completely been a dream job for me, like it is exactly what I hoped it would be. And I feel like we've accomplished a lot of good things. There's no shortage of public interest work in Arizona, but I've just been doing full time law for 38 years now. So it's just time to kind of step back from the full time practice. I think I will continue to be involved in probably a fair amount of the center's work … I plan to stay involved as the education finance case will likely be appealed no matter who wins. I put a lot into that case, and will certainly offer, like my predecessor did, to continue to help even after he stepped down.

What are you looking forward to doing with a little more time?

So I'm in a rock band. And I do plan to continue to do that and to do it some more. I have a bunch of hobbies, gardening, art, stuff like that. I'm hoping someday in the not too distant future to be a grandpa, and I plan to devote a lot of time to that, and I'll probably stay in the law in some ways too. So yeah, I have a lot of interests. Excited. I definitely have both parts of my brain that like doing stuff.





LEGISLATION

‘AN ABSOLUTE LIE’

Sen. Theresa Hatathlie rejects involvement in sober living home bill

BY JAKOB THORINGTON
jthorington@stateaffairs.com

A state senator whose family has been personally affected by sober living homes fraud blasted her colleagues and accused them of cutting her out of a bill that further regulates licensed recovery centers.

Sen. Theresa Hatathlie, D-Tuba City, spoke out against Senate Bill 1308 on an April 16 Senate floor hearing as the chamber voted on an unrelated bill that would require people to testify to the Legislature if requested by a committee to speak.

She said she felt the need to speak out against the bill because she felt one of the House cosponsors, Rep. Matt Gress, R-Pheonix, had lied about her level of involvement in drafting the bill.

Gress thanked Sen. Frank Carroll, R-Sun City West, for his work on the bill and said he knows his colleague worked with Hatathlie and many others who have been negatively impacted by sober living homes fraud.

“An absolute lie,” Hatathlie said. “If this was going to pass, I would hope that they would receive a subpoena, commit perjury and be held in contempt.”

The Arizona House of Representatives passed SB1308 with a supermajority vote of 42-10 just a day before Hatathlie’s accusation of Gress. Several members were not present during the vote, including Hathalie’s two House seatmates, Reps. Myron Tsosie, D-Chinle, and Mae Peshlakai, D-Cameron.

The bill from Caroll is a product years in the making after lawmakers sounded the alarm about sober living homes in 2019 with a House ad hoc Committee on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Peoples.

Last year, senators read a letter from Hatathlie to honor her niece who died in a sober living facility. Lawmakers have estimated sober living home fraud has cost the state more than $2 billion as the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System allows people enrolled in the American Indian Health Program to get behavioral health coverage through the state’s Medicaid system.

KEY POINTS

- **Lawmakers are sending a bill on sober living homes to the governor**
- **Sen. Theresa Hatahtlie opposes the bill**
- **Lawmakers sounded alarm on sober living homes in 2019**

SB1308 would require more oversight from the Department of Health Services into the health and safety standards of sober living homes, including making sure facilities are always free from alcohol and illegal substances.

The measure also raises the cap for violations of sober living home regulations from $500 to $1,000 and requires recovery center staff to be fingerprinted. DHS would also have more avenues to discipline sober living facilities or revoke a license if a facility has broken the law.

The Legislature failed to pass either of the two competing sober living homes bills to the finish line in 2024, but the passage of SB1308 in the House indicates some consensus on the issue.

Gress ran a similar bill to Carroll’s in 2024 and lamented the Legislature wasn’t able to incorporate more of Hathatlie’s bill during that session. Tsosie and Peshlakai supported Caroll’s 2024 bill and Tsosie said last year he was committed to working with the governor and the League of Arizona Cities and Towns in 2025 to see the bill signed this session.

“The legislative process — If you fail, try, try again,” Gress said.

The Arizona Republic reported several organizations, including the Arizona Medical Association and the Arizona Hospital and Healthcare Association, opposed Hatahtlie’s bill last year because they said it was too broad since Hatahlie wanted every health care provider of behavioral health services to get a state license as a behavioral health entity.

This year, Hathatlie has called for stronger language in all sober living homes legislation, specifically for the ability of the Arizona Corporation Commission to license treatment facilities. She also accused Gress, who worked as a policy adviser to former Corporation Commissioner Andy Tobin in 2016 and 2017, in March of killing her bill last year if she didn’t remove language related to the commission.

“Any time that these bad actors commit crimes that are given a suspension under the Department of Health Services and the attorney general, they can turn around and walk out in one afternoon with 20 more licenses,” Hathatlie said. “When it comes to letters of good standing, they go to the ACC board.”

While some Democrats felt conflicted at the lack of Hatathlie’s involvement with SB1308, most of them still voted to pass the bill. Reps. Mariana Sandoval, D-Goodyear, and Quantá Crews, D-Phoenix, said they would have rather seen Hatathlie be more included in discussions of the bill, but both voted to pass it since the bill has garnered support from other tribal communities, the League of Arizona Cities and Towns and other stakeholders.

“She has never worked with Sen. Carroll on this bill. She has serious concerns about this bill, as do I,” Sandoval said.

The league urged Gov. Katie Hobbs to sign the bill in a news release April 17.

“This legislation is urgently needed to root out the fraudulent operators who take advantage of vulnerable people under the guise of providing care,” said Kevin Hartke, mayor of Chandler and president of the League of Arizona Cities and Towns. “Too many unlicensed facilities have been allowed to thrive in the shadows, putting lives at risk and destabilizing surrounding neighborhoods. SB1308 gives the state and the cities the tools needed to hold these bad actors accountable.”

Hobbs announced a bill moratorium on April 17 out of frustration with Republicans who she said are engaging in “political warfare” over emergency funding to the Division of Developmental Disabilities. That means she won’t sign any new bills she receives until the Legislature advances a more bipartisan funding bill. However, she specified the moratorium only affects legislation transmitted to the governor after her announcement, so she may still sign SB1308 if she agrees with the proposal.



Sen. Theresa Hatathlie, D-Tuba City, speaking on the floor of the Arizona Senate on March 15, 2023. Hatahtlie has been a strong proponent of sober living home legislation for years, but opposes the bill currently headed to the governor. (Gage Skidmore / Flickr)

ELECTIONS



GRIJALVA'S DAUGHTER, HERNANDEZ AND FOXX FILE NOMINATIONS TO SUCCEED THE LATE RAÚL GRIJALVA

U.S. Rep. Raul Grijalva speaking with supporters of U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren at a town hall at the Marquee Theatre in Tempe, Arizona in August 2019. Grijalva, the long-serving Democratic member of Congress, died on March 13, 2025, at the age of 77. (Gage Skidmore / Flickr)

BY REAGAN PRIEST
rpriest@stateaffairs.com

KEY POINTS

- **Late-U.S. Rep. Raúl Grijalva's death left a vacancy in CD7.**
- **Three popular Democrats, including Grijalva's daughter, have filed for the seat.**
- **The race will be a battle between moderate and progressive Democrats.**

The stage is set in the race to fill late-U.S. Rep. Raúl Grijalva's seat in the 7th Congressional District after candidates filed nomination petitions on April 14 to secure their spot on the ballot.

In a race that is all but certain to be decided in the primary, all eyes have been on the Democratic candidates Adelita Grijalva, Daniel Hernandez and Deja Foxx.

All three submitted far more than the required 798 signatures to make the ballot by the deadline, with Grijalva submitting the most at 1,812.

Grijalva, who hopes to fill her father's seat, noted she reached the 798 signature requirement only four and a half hours after announcing her candidacy thanks to the state's online signature gathering website. She told reporters at a press conference on April 14 that her success indicates that voters in CD7 are looking for someone to carry Raúl Grijalva's progressive torch.

"Nobody's going to be able to fill my father's shoes, and I'm not going to try. But I do stand on really broad shoulders, and I'm standing on my own two feet," Grijalva said.

She recently resigned from her position on the Pima County Board of Supervisors, where she served for four years, to run for the congressional seat. Prior to that, Grijalva served for 20 years on the Tucson Unified School District Governing Board.

Hernandez, a former state lawmaker, is also part of a political family with deep ties to Tucson. He and his sisters, state Reps. Alma Hernandez, D-Tucson, and Consuelo Hernandez, D-Tucson, are known for their moderate bent and pro-Israel stances.

Scott Jones, the state legislative director for the International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers, announced the union's endorsement of Daniel Hernandez at a press conference on April 14 because of that centrist streak.

"They are very moderate, they can work with anybody and everybody that will work with them," Jones said of the Hernandez siblings.

Hernandez submitted 1,724 signatures and announced that his campaign has raised over $400,000 and secured another union endorsement from the Arizona Federation of Teachers. Grijalva and Hernandez will be fighting for crucial endorsements in the next few weeks from labor unions, environmental groups and progressive organizations.

Grijalva noted that many organizations are not yet ready to endorse because they were not expecting to have to make endorsements during an off-year for Arizona elections. But she has the backing of some of Arizona's largest Democratic names, like U.S. Sens. Ruben Gallego and Mark Kelly and former U.S. Rep. Gabby Giffords.

The two candidates have split the state Legislature's Democratic caucus nearly in half, with Hernandez claiming endorsements from state Sens. Eva Diaz, Sally Ann Gonzales and state Reps. Kevin Volk, Elda Luna-Najera, Myron Tsosie and Lydia Hernandez. Grijalva is backed by Senate Minority Leader Priya Sundareshan, Sen. Rosanna Gabaldon and Reps. Marianna Sandoval, Betty Villegas, Stephanie Stahl Hamilton, Nancy Gutierrez and Chris Mathis.

The race is shaping up to be a fight between progressive and moderate Democratic ideas, with Grijalva pledging to uphold her father's legacy and Hernandez arguing Democrats did not have a winning message in 2024.

"I think the biggest problem that we're having right now is the Democratic Party is, frankly, out of touch with what the needs are of everyday Arizonans," Hernandez told the *Arizona Capitol Times.*

Hernandez did not directly respond to a question about whether or not he is the moderate candidate in the race, but emphasized his ability to work with people in both political parties during his time in the Legislature and said it is something he plans to carry over if elected.

Grijalva has yet to respond to inquiries from the *Arizona Capitol Times.*

While Grijalva and Hernandez are the highest profile candidates in the race, they are not the only Democrats on the primary ballot. Deja Foxx, a political influencer who worked on Kamala Harris' presidential campaign in 2024, is also running for the seat.

Foxx has framed herself as an alternative to the traditional Democratic establishment and is one of several Gen Z candidates running for blue seats in Congress this year. Her campaign did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The candidates have limited time to get their message out to voters, with mail ballots going out on June 18 and the primary scheduled to take place on July 15.

Raul Grijalva, the long-serving Democratic member of Congress, died on March 13, 2025, at the age of 77.

GUEST COMMENTARY

Arizona leaders must restore our schools

By William David Nichols

We must acknowledge that there are Arizona schools where excellent teachers inspire students to perform at high achievement levels. The Arizona Department of Education (ADE) provides cutting-edge academic standards and teaching strategies. Unfortunately, the overall picture of schools is bleak, and there is no silver bullet remedy to a crisis of neglect by policymakers. However, a bipartisan consensus for sufficient funding that supports a broad-based commitment to strategies for every student is required to break free from a cycle of crisis.

In the September 2024 edition of The Arizona Republic, a Consumer Affairs study found that Arizona schools were ranked at the bottom of all 50 states in all issues of quality in education.

Since the ADE's initiative to adopt the Empowerment Scholarship Account (ESA) in 2022, participation has expanded exponentially. This statewide funding strategy allows students to use state-funded vouchers to apply to their school of choice.

Consequently, thousands of students either left public schools or never attended one, using vouchers at charter or private schools. This otherwise positive school choice program reduced the ADE's funding plan for public schools. Consequently, along with other factors, more than 20 public schools have closed, creating a dire predicament.

According to a 2023 report by the Grand Canyon Institute, the ESA will cost Arizona's 2024 General Fund $700 million. There is an ongoing controversy over the voucher program and its costs among some elected officials, the governor, and the superintendent of public instruction, all the while Arizona's children struggle.

Despite the bad news, we can devote our resources to improving reading, children's most important academic skill. Learners who struggle with reading will not do well in other subjects. In his book, "The Educated Child" (1999), former U.S. Secretary of Education Bill Bennett made a resounding statement: "If a child cannot read on grade level (proficient) by the end of the third grade, there is an 80% chance that he will not graduate from high school."

Scientific, reliable data prove that reading is the primary skill in student success. Most reading assessments, state and national, closely align with other credible measurements. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), the gold standard in evaluating academic progress, conducts a bi-annual assessment for every state. Crucial are the subjects of reading and math in 4th and 8th grade. NAEP uses an algorithmic method for randomly selected schools. The most recent NAEP (2024) for Arizona's average reading score for 4th graders ranked sixth from the bottom of all 50 states in America.

The state's 2020 legislative mandate requires all certified teachers in grades 1 - 5 to obtain an endorsement. It is a course known as the "Science of Reading." Other states have adopted the requirement.

The ADE outcomes from reading assessments mirror national test scores and validate state achievement measures. Yet, Arizona public school students lag in the success rates of 44 other states. This failure lies at the feet of decision-makers who appear to be complacent and unwilling to prioritize the education budget, ignoring that future opportunities will be limited for more than an estimated 2 million Arizona children.

The regressive tax laws in Arizona create another stumbling block to better school funding. Low to middle income families pay more property and sales taxes than higher-income families. Students from these lower socioeconomic communities are also at several disadvantages, including a lack of technology in the home, parents who may be unable to assist them, and a community culture that often creates low academic expectations, a precursor to higher dropout rates and low high school graduation rates.

Parents, teachers, education administrators, state legislators and the public want good schools. It will benefit the state's economy, businesses and families considering moving to Arizona. Taxpayers must insist that our elected officials do the right thing. The school voucher program should be revisited to seek methods to cap the funds and/or re-align procedures to stop the bleeding.

William David Nichols, Ed.D. has been a teacher, education consultant, author and a school board member in both public and private institutions.

MORNING SCOOP™ with Arizona Capitol Times

CAP Central Arizona Project

Saving Water, Securing the Future: City Conservation Efforts

8:00 a.m. Wednesday, April 30th

Arizona is facing one of the longest droughts in modern history, with reduced water from the Colorado River and hotter, drier conditions ahead. In response, cities like Gilbert, Phoenix, and Surprise are leading innovative water conservation programs that educate residents and businesses on efficient water use. Join us as conservation leaders share the results of their efforts and how these programs are helping secure a sustainable water future for the Valley.

Join host Steve Goldstein for this informative discussion.
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AMANDA LACEY
City of Surprise



STEVE GOLDSTEIN
Panel Host



For additional information on this Morning Scoop, please contact **Sandy Mitchell** at Smitchell@azcapitoltimes.com or 623-218-3575.

EDUCATION



Students learn about local varieties of produce during a National School Lunch Week event at Nottingham Elementary School in Arlington, VA. (Lance Cheung / USDA.gov via Flickr)

Governor approves ban on ultraprocessed food, but reduced-price lunches still in limbo

BY KIERA RILEY
kriley@stateaffairs.com

KEY POINTS

- **Gov. Hobbs approved a ban on ultraprocessed foods in school lunches**
- **A related $3.8 million appropriation for reduced-price lunches failed**
- **Lawmakers plan to negotiate school lunch funding in the budget**

A proposal to ban ultraprocessed foods in schools received the governor's approval, leaving a larger conversation about school lunch funding to be addressed in budget negotiations.

On April 14, Gov. Katie Hobbs signed House Bill 2164, sponsored by Rep. Leo Biasiucci, R-Lake Havasu City, banning the use of eleven additives and dyes from school lunches.

While Biasiuccui's proposal made it across the finish line, a similar measure, introduced by Rep. Nancy Gutierrez, D-Tucson, stalled out. Her bill would have also added $3.8 million to cover co-pays for students enrolled in federal reduced-price lunch programs in addition to banning ultraprocessed food.

Despite the bill's failure, the $3.8 million support for reduced-price lunches remains a priority for the governor and Democrats, with some potential for Republican support, as the budget waits on the horizon.

In 2024, the Legislature included a $3.8 million one-time appropriation in the state budget to cover copays for students qualifying for the reduced-price lunch program. That state funding came in the wake of a lapse in federal Covid funds which kept the program operating during the prior year.

However, with the funding set to expire once again, Hobbs made it a priority in her executive budget to continue the same $3.8 million funding in the next fiscal year.

The co-pay costs 40 cents for lunch and 30 cents for breakfast, equating to an estimated cost of $126 per child per school year, for families between 130% and 185% of the federal poverty line, or about $40,560 to $57,720 annually.

"That may, to some people, not sound like a lot — 70 cents a day — but if you have more than one child and (are) earning about $42,000 a year for a family of four, (70 cents) is a lot. It just adds up really quickly," Ashley St. Thomas, director of public policy for the Arizona Food Bank Network, said. "It would be the first time these families would have to pay that co-pay in five years. And we just know it has done a lot already to improve access to meals."

According to a policy brief by the Arizona State University College of Health Solutions, the number of meals served to students for both breakfast and lunch went up by about 1 million after changes in federal policy and continued state funding.

Gutierrez's $3.8 million allocation bill got off to a strong start. The House Education Committee advanced the legislation 9-3, with support from Republicans Rep. Matt Gress, R-Phoenix, and Biasiucci. The House Appropriations Committee also approved it with a 16-2 vote with bipartisan support from committee Chair David Livingston, R-Peoria, and the majority of Republicans on the committee.

But after successfully navigating two committees, the legislation failed to make it to the floor for a third-read vote.

Still, Gutierrez says she plans to continue advocating for the appropriation in budget negotiations. She may well see some Republican support, as she did initially, and Biasiucci himself said he would support the appropriation piece.

"That is still alive and well, but it will be a budget negotiation," Biasiucci said.

Although the law banning ultraprocessed foods is not expected to have any significant fiscal impact, Biasiucci noted that it is an important piece of the school lunch conversation.

"I completely supported (Gutierrez) when she did that because I believe that we have to make sure we have the funding available to make sure the meals are being paid for," Biasiucci said. "I'm always going to support more money going to our food program."

St. Thomas of the Arizona Food Bank Network emphasized the importance of securing continued funding.

"We know all of the outcomes that come with kids getting to eat meals in school," St. Thomas said. "Better attendance, higher test scores, just all the things that go along with not having to worry about eating lunch or breakfast."

EDUCATION

HOUSE APPROVES ALLOWING CHAPLAINS IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS



Chaplains would not be from any specific religion, but from a list of eligible religions dictated in the legislation. (RDNE Stock project / Pexels)

BY HOWARD FISCHER | *Capitol Media Services*

KEY POINTS

- **The House approved SB1269 on a 31-29 vote.**
- **The measure would allow chaplains in public schools.**
- **Lawmakers say it addresses counselor shortages, secularism.**

Saying children need more God, the state House approved allowing chaplains in public school classrooms.

Senate Bill 1269 would allow — but not require — school boards to invite chaplains from various religions into schools for "support, services or programs" for students.

Parents would be involved, and a list of available chaplains would be provided. Proponents say the plan is crafted to prohibit participants from proselytizing.

That did not satisfy foes who said if parents want religious counseling for their children they are free to get that someplace other than public school. And they pointed out that the state even provides vouchers of taxpayer funds for other options.

There's also the contention that chaplains would not be needed if the state properly funded counselors and therapists.

But proponents contend that there is still a need for students to get a different point of view.

Rep. David Livingston, R-Peoria, said students are dealing with everything from drugs to cutting themselves.

"This bill is not the solution to everything in life," said Livingston. But he said it could be one of the answers.

"What parents are wanting is more ethics, more discipline, and, I believe, more God in their schools," he continued.

"When we talk about issues of suicide and cutting themselves, maybe a counselor is not what's required," Rep. Teresa Martinez, R-Casa Grande, said.

"Maybe faith and God is what is required," she said. "I think we have to do a better job of including God in everything we do."

Rep. Justin Olson, R-Mesa, said he believes that the United States is creating a state religion in violation of the Constitution. That religion, he said, is secularism.

"We need to recognize that we should be turning to God, we should be looking to faith, and our children need opportunities to see faith and to look to a higher power," Olson said. "And that's what is available under this bill."

The final House vote was 31-29. One Republican did, however, reject the proposal.

Rep. Nick Kupper, R-Surprise, told colleagues that he agrees with many of their arguments that there is no constitutional requirement to separate faith and state. But he said what's in SB1269 goes too far.

"I think we've made our public schools into mother, father, counselor, priest, rabbi," Kupper said, beyond the basic point of public education. "This bill expands what a school should be."

A final Senate vote is needed before the measure goes to the governor.

On one hand, the legislation opens the door to counselors of all faiths — sort of.

To get on the list, a chaplain would have to be from a "local religious group." But that is limited to those who meet at least monthly — and only if those meetings are at a site in which the district is located.

SB1269 further defines eligible religions as those that have a hierarchy of teachers, clergy, sages or priests, has a regular practice of ritual or protocol — and "acknowledges the existence of and worships one or more supernatural entities that possess power over the natural world."

All that raised questions from Rep. Stephanie Simacek, R-Phoenix.

Last month, during a committee hearing, Simacek raised the issue of how those rules would keep out counselors who are atheists, even if that is the preference of the parents.

That didn't slow progress on the bill. So this week, with a roll-call vote on the House floor, she argued that the measure violates parental rights in other ways.

"I'm the parent of two in public education," Simacek argued. This bill, she argued, would allow a chaplain "to preach to my child what is right and what is wrong."

Rep. Nancy Gutierrez, D-Tucson, said some kids need to talk with trained adults about issues, such as counselors or social workers. Yet Arizona averages only one counselor per about 600 students, while the national standard is one per 250.

"We are vastly underfunded," she said. "It's a critical role."

And Gutierrez said nothing in this bill helps.

"All this does is put volunteers on a campus to talk about spirit, religion," she said. "And that's not going to help these kids who are harming themselves."

Rep. Stephanie Stahl Hamilton, D-Tucson, warned of another potential problem.

Under Arizona law, teachers, counselors, therapists and social workers are all "mandatory reporters." That means they are required to inform police or the Department of Child Safety if there is reason to believe a child has been abused or neglected.

But Stahl Hamilton pointed out the requirement to report specifically exempts clergy if they get a confidential communication or confession in connection with their religious duties. And that, she said, would include those who are working as volunteer chaplains.

"I find that very disconcerting that we are creating a loophole for clergy who are not held to the same standard," Stahl Hamilton said.

HEALTH

HOBBS VETOES SODA BAN FOR FOOD STAMPS RECIPIENTS

BY HOWARD FISCHER | *Capitol Media Services*

Food stamp recipients will not be denied the ability to use their benefits to purchase sodas, at least not now, and not in Arizona.

In a veto message on April 15, Gov. Katie Hobbs said she appreciates that the intent of HB2165 is to "improve the health outcomes of Arizonans." But the governor said that's not sufficient to have Arizona ask permission from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to let the state take sodas off the list of eligible purchases.

"This legislation unnecessarily deprives Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program participants of their purchasing power and relegates them to a new underclass of grocery shoppers," Hobbs wrote.

Instead, the governor, who said she once was a food stamp recipient, said lawmakers should focus their attention on "more productive efforts to expand opportunities for participants to purchase fresh foods."

The veto came despite Republican lawmakers bringing Robert F. Kennedy Jr., the new head of the federal Department of Health and Human Services, to Phoenix for a press conference a week ago to promote healthier eating.

KEY POINTS

- **The soda ban passed the Legislature, but was vetoed by the governor**
- **A ban on food coloring in products sold at schools was still approved**
- **The debate over processed foods and food stamps is likely to reach the national stage**

That specifically included enacting a ban on certain artificial dyes and other chemicals from what can be served at public schools. That means not just school lunches but what is available in vending machines, though there is an exception for what can be sold at after-school events.

Hobbs signed that measure on April 14 after it gained unanimous legislative support.

But the proposal by Rep. Leo Biasiucci, R-Lake Havasu City, to ban the use of food stamps to purchase sodas became a partisan affair, with Republicans in support and Democrats unified in their opposition.

No one made the argument that sodas have any nutritional value. In fact, that was one of the points raised by Biasiucci who pointed out that the program is specifically about "nutritional assistance."

Sen. Analise Ortiz, D-Phoenix, however, said this is about more than sodas. She said this is the first step to the state regulating the diet of those who need food stamps — including many working poor — in the name of health.

She noted, for example, that the original legislation also would have banned the use of food stamps to purchase candies and sweets.

Biasiucci acknowledged the only reason he dropped sweets from the ban was because there was no legal way to craft a definition that would allow recipients to distinguish protein bars, many of which have sugar and honey, from regular candy bars which can contain healthy items like almonds.

"I think it's safe that we can assume that HB2165 is just one step in that there will be future bills that will attack other types of foods that people consume," Ortiz said.

Biasiucci said what made this now-vetoed version of the measure acceptable is that it didn't require making such decisions, given the lack of any nutritional benefit from sodas, sugared or otherwise.

But Kennedy made no secret that he believes that banning sodas could just be a first step.

"You have to start somewhere," he said.

"Believe me, I would like to stop the entire processed food program," Kennedy said. "But we're not going to do that overnight."

Kennedy said that about 10% of food stamp purchases are for sugary drinks, calling any effort to eliminate them from what's allowable "the quickest and most obvious thing to do."

While Hobbs' veto kills Biasiucci's legislation, it is likely not the end of a battle which now may move to the national stage. Brooke Rollins, newly confirmed chief of USDA, said last month he wants to reform what items can be bought with food stamps. And she told reporters she will work with Kennedy to revamp the list.



Robert F. Kennedy Jr. meets with Sen. Janae Shamp, R-Surprise, and Rep. Leo Biasiucci, R-Lake Havasu City, at an April 8 hearing to discuss banning the use of food stamps to purchase sodas. (Howard Fischer / Capitol Media Services)

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

‘Stolen valor’ bill passes Senate despite lawmaker feud

A bill that would establish criminal penalties for individuals who impersonate armed forces veterans garnered wide support from the Senate, including a “yes” vote from a lawmaker who had been accused of blocking the measure earlier this session.

— Jamar Younger, Arizona Capitol Times



Rep. Walter Blackman, R-Snowflake, speaking with the media at a press conference concerning stolen valor legislation at the Arizona State Capitol in Phoenix, Arizona, on Jan. 15. (Gage Skidmore / Flickr)

College athletes could soon be paid for their likeness under House bill

Arizona universities are a step away from taking a huge leap into the future of collegiate athletics: Paying student athletes in hopes of attracting better prospects.

— Howard Fischer, Capitol Media Services

Saudi-owned farm denies legal liability for damage caused by groundwater use

Attorneys for a Saudi-owned alfalfa farm want a judge to toss out a bid by Attorney General Kris Mayes to halt its pumping of groundwater, saying what she is doing is illegal.

— Howard Fischer, Capitol Media Services

Gov. Hobbs’ chief of staff responds to Republican criticism

After Republican Rep. David Livingston called out Gov. Katie Hobbs’ chief of staff Chad Campbell at a House Appropriations hearing Tuesday, Campbell said Livingston’s statements are “180 degrees from what’s actually been taking place.”

— Reagan Priest, Arizona Capitol Times

Ag Department nominee getting slow walked to Senate confirmation

Gov. Katie Hobbs’ nominee to lead the Department of Agriculture is being held in the Senate, according to the chair of the Director Nominations Committee.

— Reagan Priest, Arizona Capitol Times

Arizona students challenge Trump strategy to get them to ‘self deport’

Two Southern Arizona graduate students allege in federal lawsuits that President Donald Trump and the U.S. government unlawfully revoked their visas and terminated them from a database that tracks visas because of their races and national origins.

— Gary Grado, Arizona Capitol Times

Governor vetoes 7 groundwater bills sponsored by Rep. Gail Griffin

In a strongly worded veto letter for several water bills, Gov. Katie Hobbs criticized a lawmaker on Tuesday for blocking attempts to pass rural groundwater reform.

— Jakob Thorington, Arizona Capitol Times

Cell phones now banned in Arizona classrooms

Gov. Katie Hobbs signed a bill that requires school district governing boards to create policies restricting the use of social media, cell phones, and other devices during the school day.

— Jamar Younger, Arizona Capitol Times

Rep. Keshel, Sen. Finchem out to put family court judges in check

Some Republican lawmakers are exploring reforms to the state’s family court system after one House representative threatened to investigate a Maricopa County Superior Court judge about high-conflict divorce cases.

— Jakob Thorington, Arizona Capitol Times

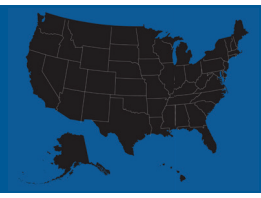
Older Arizona voters are closely watching Trump’s tariffs — and their retirement accounts

SUN CITY, Ariz. (AP) — Susan Hemphill said she’s always been frugal with her spending. But the recent volatility in the stock market caused by President Donald Trump’s on-again, off-again tariffs and an escalating trade war with China have made her even more cautious.

— The Associated Press

FROM OTHER STATES

NEWS OF INTEREST FROM ACROSS THE NATION



Arkansas

EX-GOV. MIKE HUCKABEE CONFIRMED AS AMBASSADOR TO ISRAEL

The Senate has confirmed former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee as President Donald Trump's ambassador to Israel. The vote day comes two days after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu visited the White House. Huckabee is a strong supporter of Israel, and that may prove critical to Trump's efforts to end the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza, the conflict with Hezbollah in Lebanon and threats posed to Israel by Iran. Huckabee is a well-known evangelical Christian. He's acknowledged his past support for Israel's right to annex the West Bank and incorporate its Palestinian population into Israel. But he has said it wouldn't be his "prerogative" to carry out that policy.

California

STATE OKS $2.8B TO CLOSE MEDICAID FUNDING GAP AFTER EXPANDING COVERAGE

SACRAMENTO — Gov. Gavin Newsom has signed legislation to provide $2.8 billion to close the budget hole in the state's Medicaid program. The governor's signing came as part of the state's solution to address the $6.2 billion gap. The shortfall could force Newsom and Democratic lawmakers to roll back coverage for some of the 15 million people relying on the safety net program. The budget hole is a result of the state expanding coverage to all low-income residents regardless of immigration status. It also has been ascribed to rising pharmacy costs and a larger-than-expected aging population. Newsom pledged to protect immigrant benefits but acknowledged "tough choices" lay ahead.

Florida

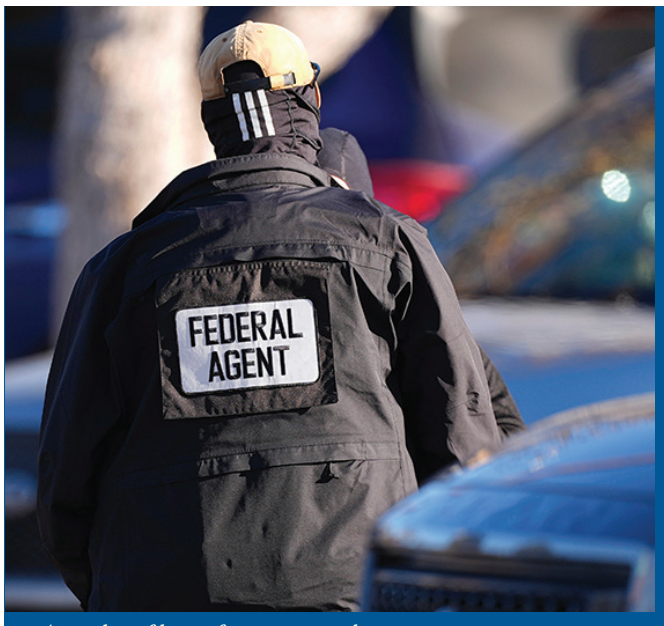
SEARCH SUSPENDED FOR 5 MISSING FROM CAPSIZED BOAT IN 'SUSPECTED SMUGGLING VENTURE'

PORT ST. LUCIE — The U.S. Coast Guard has suspended the search for five people missing after a boat capsized off Florida's Atlantic Coast during what was suspected of being a failed smuggling attempt. The Coast Guard says they rescued four people from the ocean on April 13. They also recovered the body of one person. The boat capsized about 29 miles off St. Lucie Inlet, which is 46 miles north of West Palm Beach. After the rescue, a survivor told the Coast Guard the vessel departed Bimini with nine people on Friday, and it capsized early Saturday morning. Crews searched for about seven hours, and covered more than 1,240 square miles.

Idaho

STRICT ABORTION BAN LOOSENED BY JUDGE'S RULING ON MEDICAL EXEMPTIONS

BOISE — A judge has ruled that an abortion in Idaho is not prohibited if pregnancy complications could cause a woman's death. The ruling says an abortion is allowed even if death "is neither imminent nor assured." Four women are suing over Idaho's strict abortion bans. The women, who are represented by the Center for Reproductive Rights, aren't asking for the state's abortion ban to be overturned. Instead, they want the judge to clarify and expand the exceptions to the strict ban so people facing serious pregnancy complications can receive abortions before they are at death's door.



A member of law enforcement stands near an entrance to an apartment complex during a raid by federal agents Feb. 5, 2025, in east Denver. (AP Photo / David Zalubowski)

Colorado

JUDGE PUTS TEMPORARY HOLD ON IMMIGRANT REMOVALS

***DENVER* — A federal judge has put a temporary hold on deportations of immigrants in Colorado who face possible removal under President Donald Trump's invocation of an 18th century law known as the Alien Enemies Act. The Republican president declared the law in effect to speed up deportations of members of a Venezuelan gang he contends is invading the United States. The last time the law was used was during World War II. The Supreme Court says those accused of being in the gang deserve a hearing in federal court before being deported. That's led judges in New York and Texas to put temporary holds on removals.**

Kentucky

INSPECTIONS OF BOURBON BARRELS WILL TAKE TIME AT FLOODED DISTILLERY

FRANKFORT — Signs of renewal are underway at the Buffalo Trace Distillery in Kentucky since the floodwaters have receded. But distillery executives say the task of inspecting bourbon barrels touched by the high water will take time. The historic distillery in Frankfort has resumed shipping spirits and hopes to reopen its bottling operation in coming days. The update came from Jake Wenz, CEO and president of the Sazerac Co. and the distillery. The campus could reopen to visitors soon on a limited basis. The distillery produces sought-after bourbon brands. It was inundated by flooding from the nearby Kentucky River after days of downpours.

Louisiana

ACTIVIST'S ATTORNEYS PLAN TO APPEAL HIS DEPORTATION RULING

JENA — An immigration judge has ruled that a Palestinian Columbia University graduate student who participated in protests against Israel can be deported. Mahmoud Khalil's attorneys plan to appeal. Federal immigration agents detained Khalil last month. It was the first arrest under President Donald Trump's crackdown on students who joined campus protests against the war in Gaza. The legal U.S. resident was taken to an immigration detention center in Louisiana. There, a judge ruled the U.S. government had "established by clear and convincing evidence that he is removable." Khalil's attorneys say they will appeal to the Board of Immigration Appeals. They can also pursue an asylum case.

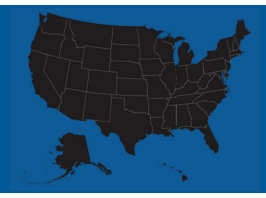
Missouri

ST. LOUIS SUES OVER THE STATE'S CONTROL OF LOCAL POLICE

ST. LOUIS — The city of St. Louis and the leader of its City Council have filed a federal lawsuit against a new Missouri law that puts a state-appointed board in control of the local police department. The case challenges a law that makes St. Louis among a handful of major U.S. cities that don't fully oversee law enforcement. Board of Aldermen President Megan Green argues that the new law violates her rights to free expression, freedom of assembly and to petition the state government. The city says the law violates a provision of the Missouri Constitution that prohibits unfunded state mandates. Supporters say the law will make the city safer.

FROM OTHER STATES

NEWS OF INTEREST FROM ACROSS THE NATION



Montana

TRUMP NOMINEE FOR PUBLIC LANDS POST WITHDRAWS, CRITICIZED JAN. 6 CAPITOL ATTACK

BILLINGS — President Donald Trump's nominee to oversee an agency that manages a quarter-billion acres of public land has withdrawn her nomination. The move follows revelations that nominee Kathleen Sgamma criticized the Republican president in 2021 for inciting the Jan. 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol. Sgamma's withdrawal was announced before a planned confirmation hearing on her nomination to lead the Interior Department's Bureau of Land Management. Trump's interior secretary in his first term, David Bernhardt, wrote on social media that Sgamma's withdrawal was "self-inflicted," and he included a link to a journalism website that posted her 2021 comments.

Nebraska

RANCHERS HOPE TRUMP'S TARIFFS BOOST DEMAND FOR CATTLE BUT FEAR MARKET UNCERTAINTY

OMAHA — Ranchers hope President Donald Trump's tariffs will make imported beef expensive enough that Americans will turn to cattle raised at home for all their hamburger and steaks. That might raise prices enough to give ranchers the incentive to expand their herds for the first time in decades. But doing that would take at least two years, and it's not clear if Trump's 10% tariffs on most of the world besides China are high enough to make that happen. And the tariffs keep changing so it's hard for ranchers to plan. About the only thing clear so far is that American ranchers will likely lose one of their biggest markets as a result of the 125% tariffs imposed by China in response to Trump.

Nevada

FEDS SEEK RELEASE OF EX-FBI INFORMANT WHO FABRICATED BIDEN BRIBERY STORY

LAS VEGAS — The U.S. government said in a motion filed in Los Angeles federal court that it now supports the release of a former FBI informant while he appeals his case. Alexander Smirnov is serving a six-year sentence for fabricating a story about President Joe Biden and his son Hunter accepting bribes. Prosecutors previously said it was an effort to influence the 2020 presidential election, but the Justice Department special counsel who prosecuted Smirnov resigned in January before President Donald Trump's inauguration. The case was reassigned last week to a new prosecutor who said in the motion the U.S. government will review its theory of the case.

New Mexico

GOVERNOR MOBILIZES NATIONAL GUARD TO TACKLE CRIME IN ALBUQUERQUE

ALBUQUERQUE — Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham has declared a state of emergency in New Mexico's largest city, saying that a significant increase in crime in Albuquerque warrants the help of the New Mexico National Guard. She signed an executive order, clearing the way for troops to be trained and deployed along the historic Route 66 corridor starting in mid-May. The order also frees up state funds for the effort. Albuquerque Police Chief Harold Medina requested the help, pointing to the fentanyl epidemic and an increase in violent juvenile crime. Watchdog groups have concerns that militarizing civilian law enforcement will lead to civil rights violations.

North Dakota

JUDGE DISMISSES CHARGE AGAINST MAN ACCUSED OF IMPERSONATING ICE OFFICER

WILLISTON — A North Dakota judge has dismissed a charge against a man accused of impersonating an Immigration and Customs Enforcement officer. It is unclear why the case was dropped. Judge Kirsten Sjue dismissed the misdemeanor against Shane Randall. He was accused in February of arriving at the Williams County Correctional Center in Williston and impersonating an ICE agent after an inmate called him to come pick him up, court papers said. Jail staff released the inmate to him, the documents said. Authorities later found and arrested the two.

Ohio

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS WANTS FEMALE JUSTICE'S PORTRAIT BROUGHT UP FROM BASEMENT

COLUMBUS — The Ohio League of Women Voters is urging the Ohio Supreme Court to return a portrait of the state's first female chief justice from a new exhibit in the courthouse basement to the building's main hallway. In a letter, Executive Director Jen Miller said she is certain justices chose the location of their planned "Women in the Law" display to emphasize the difficulties of being female. But she said retired Chief Justice Maureen O'Connor's portrait belongs upstairs. O'Connor alienated many fellow Republicans by casting key swing votes against GOP-drawn political maps.

Oregon

DMV FINDS NEW CASES OF PEOPLE REGISTERED TO VOTE WITHOUT PROOF OF CITIZENSHIP

SALEM — Oregon's DMV says it has found new cases of people being registered to vote despite not showing proof of U.S. citizenship. A new DMV report revealed 118 new cases, bringing the total of known cases to over 1,700. Nearly all the newfound errors, or 111 cases, involved people whose information was entered into a previous computer system that was in place between 2010 and 2020. The DMV has been reviewing records and issuing monthly reports since the errors were revealed last fall. The department resumed automatic voter registrations in February after Gov. Tina Kotek had ordered a pause due to the errors.

Tennessee

TRUMP COMMERCE SECRETARY SAYS ELECTRONICS TARIFF REPRIEVE TEMPORARY

NASHVILLE — U.S. Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick says tariff exemptions announced last week on electronics like smartphones and laptops are only a temporary reprieve until the Trump administration develops a new tariff approach specific to the semiconductor industry, The Trump administration had said it will exclude electronics like smartphones and laptops from reciprocal tariffs, a move that could help keep the prices down for popular consumer electronics that aren't usually made in the U.S. But White House officials, including President Donald Trump himself, spent April 13 downplaying the significance of exemptions. Trump says such goods still face a 20% tariff from China.

Wisconsin

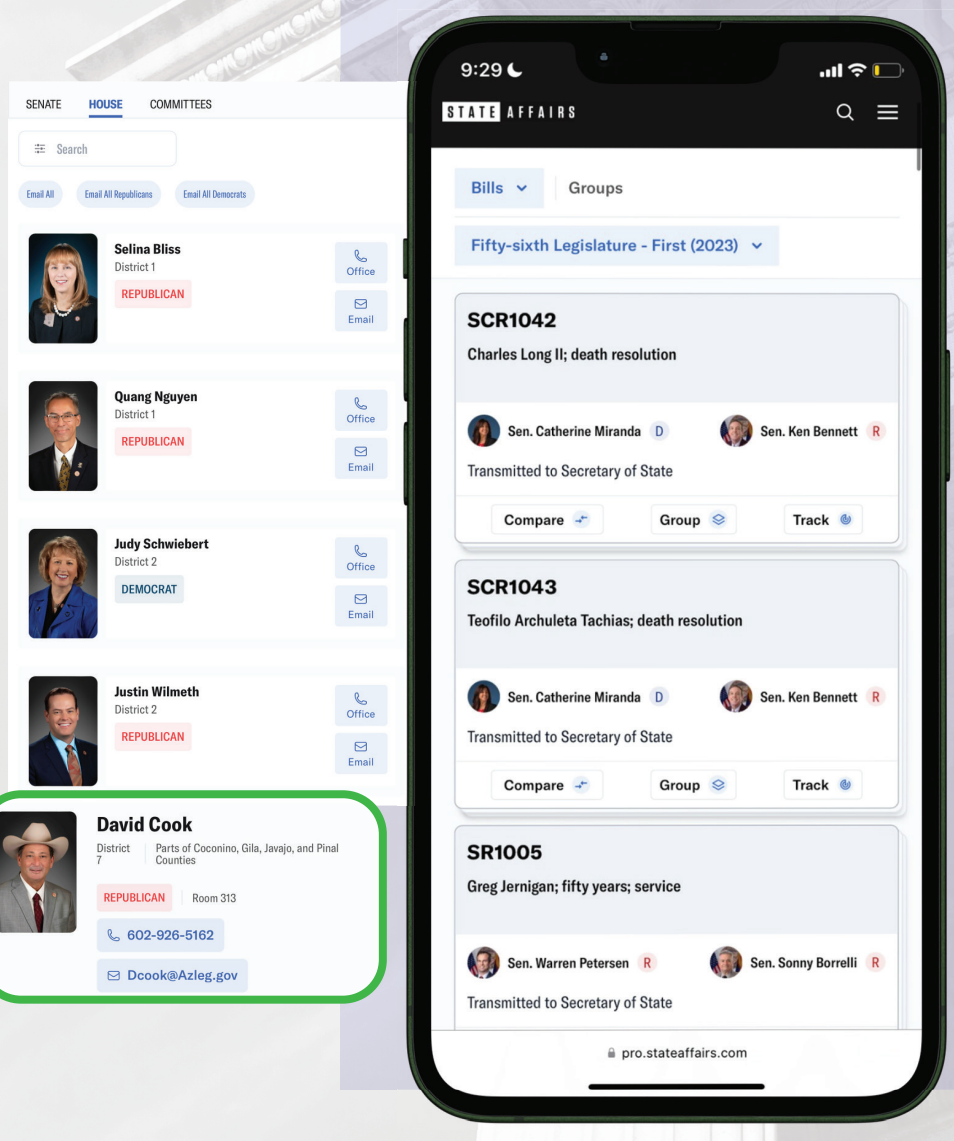
CLERK WHO FAILED TO COUNT ALMOST 200 BALLOTS RESIGNS

MADISON — Wisconsin's capital city's municipal clerk has resigned amid investigations into how she failed to count nearly 200 ballots in November's elections. Madison Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway's office announced City Clerk Maribeth Witzel-Behl's resignation. The mayor's spokesperson, Dylan Brogan, says the clerk submitted her resignation last week but the mayor had to wait to announce it because Witzel-Behl's contract gave several days to change her mind. The mayor had suspended Witzel-Behl in March as the city launched an internal investigation into the uncounted ballots. The mistake did not affect the outcome of any races or referenda. The state elections commission is investigating how Witzel-Behl missed the ballots as well.

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