October 31, 2025

Arizona Capitol Times

Your inside source for Arizona government, politics, and business

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Food banks struggle to meet demand of SNAP cuts
See page 8 for more details

Decline in state housing permits amid high demand
See page 11 for more details

State superintendent pushes for removal of DEI in schools
See page 12 for more details



A speed limiter device in use, preventing the vehicle from going over the posted speed limit of 35 mph. (Jakob Thorington / Arizona Capitol Times)

Arizona to consider speed-limiting devices to improve road safety

BY JAKOB THORINGTON
jthorington@stateaffairs.com

An Arizona representative is trying to make the state's roads safer by using new technology to tether excessive and frequent speeders to the posted speed limits.

Rep. Quang Nguyen, R-Prescott Valley, said on Oct. 27 that he's introducing a bill next session that would allow courts to order a speed-inhibitor device to be installed in the vehicles of motorists who frequently or excessively violate speeding laws.

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"It's been an absolute honor … I've made a lot of friends, learned a lot and hopefully made a little difference."

— Daniel Corr, a long-serving member of the State Board of Education, on his retirement.

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A fake image of Gov. Katie Hobbs made using Grok. Image based on work by Gage Skidmore. (Brock Blasdell / Arizona Capitol Times)

Few protections for elected officials targeted by deepfakes

BY REAGAN PRIEST
rpriest@stateaffairs.com

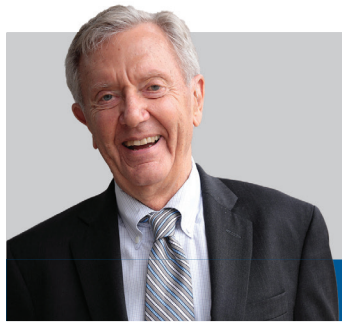
"I promise if I'm reelected governor, you won't recognize your state by the end of my term," Gov. Katie Hobbs says in a six-second video posted to X on Oct. 17.

Except the governor never said that. The video is a deepfake, developed using generative artificial intelligence and an official portrait of Hobbs taken in 2023.

To Arizona politicos familiar with the governor, the video is obviously fake. The voice does not belong to Hobbs and the smile the fake governor flashes at the end of the clip is slightly uncanny.

But to average voters and out-of-state observers, the video is realistic enough to fool the viewer. And it has been viewed more than 10,000 times, thanks to a repost from Republican Sen. Wendy Rogers, who did not respond to a request for comment.

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Bruce Babbitt: The 'Godfather' of Arizona water

See page 3 for more details

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CAPITOL QUOTES



"The rainy day fund is for unexpected economic downturns, not Washington gridlock."

— House Speaker Steve Montenegro, R-Goodyear, on using Arizona's $1.6 billion rainy day fund to bail out the federal government during its shutdown.



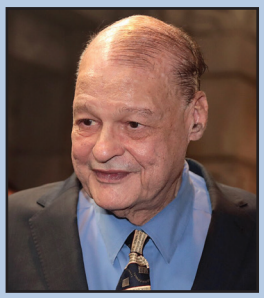
"If this is not a rainy day, I'm not really sure what is."

— Attorney General Kris Mayes, calling on the Legislature and Gov. Katie Hobbs to utilize Arizona's rainy day fund before the suspension of federal SNAP benefits on Nov. 1.



"In light of the Committee's findings, I respectfully urge Northern Arizona University to take immediate steps to review and terminate its partnership with Chongqing University of Posts and Telecommunications."

— Rep. Eli Crane, R-Ariz., on Arizona universities dropping degree programs conducted alongside Chinese colleges.



"If we wait until we're in the crosshairs it might be too late. We don't want to chance $800 million."

— State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Horne, on why he's pushing Arizona schools to remove language related to diversity, equity and inclusion from school materials and training.

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Publisher: State Affairs Inc.

Chief Content Officer and Editor-in-Chief:
Alison Bethel

Managing Editor: Teri Hayt
thayt@stateaffairs.com

Assistant Editor: Brock Blasdell
bblasdell@stateaffairs.com

Copy Editor: Don Harris
dharris@stateaffairs.com

Staff Writers:

Senior statehouse reporter: Jamar Younger
jyounger@stateaffairs.com

Jakob Thorington: Jthorington@stateaffairs.com
Kiera Riley: kriley@stateaffairs.com
Reagan Priest: rpriest@stateaffairs.com
Ellis Preston: epreston@stateaffairs.com

Page Designer: Antone Amye

Sales and Advertising
Multimedia Sales Executive: Sandra Mitchell
smitchell@stateaffairs.com

Circulation
Customer Service: (602) 258-7026
mengelmann@stateaffairs.com

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or contact mengelmann@stateaffairs.com

To contact the newsrooms:
Call (602) 258-2504 or contact
editor@azcapitoltimes.com

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CAPITOL TIMES Q&A



Former Gov. Bruce Babbitt at the Arizona State Capitol in Phoenix, Arizona. (Gage Skidmore/Flickr)

BRUCE BABBITT

The 'Godfather' of Arizona water

BY JAMAR YOUNGER, *jyounger@stateaffairs.com*

Former Arizona Governor and U.S. Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt has devoted nearly all of his public service career to tackling water and environmental issues in Arizona and throughout the country.

As a Democratic governor, Babbitt worked with Republican lawmakers and other officials to craft the influential Groundwater Management Act of 1980, which continues to serve as the state's only groundwater management regulatory framework.

Babbitt has also helped shape policies for the Colorado River and continues to serve as an influential voice during negotiations between the Upper Basin and Lower Basin states.

He also lobbied the state Legislature to pass the Ag-to-Urban legislation last session.

Sen. Lela Alston, D-Phoenix, referred to Babbitt as the "godfather watching over water in Arizona" during floor testimony for the measure in June.

Babbitt reflected on some of his notable policies and provided his input on the Colorado River negotiations during an interview with the *Arizona Capitol Times*.

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Answers have been lightly edited for clarity.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

Bruce Babbitt: The 'Godfather' of Arizona water

Why have you remained so involved with water issues?

When I left Arizona to become secretary of the interior, that made me the water master. That's an actual phrase, water master of the lower Colorado River. And that meant that I was directly involved in all this stuff for almost all of my public life. And you just get so deeply involved. When I left the (Department of the Interior), people continued to seek my advice, and I continued my interest, and I began speaking and writing and advocating.

Most recently, Gov. (Katie) Hobbs asked me during the debate over Ag-to-Urban last year … she asked me to help lobby the Legislature. So all of a sudden, I am back talking to legislators. A question many people ask (is) 'Bruce, who's your client? You're a lawyer, or do you represent somebody in some corporation or some faction?' My only client is Bruce Babbitt. I don't represent anybody. I'm in this because I care and I believe I have something to offer, and I like doing it. I've got a lot of friends all over Arizona, Colorado. I've worked in all seven states during my time at the Interior. And it's so interesting, and I like it so much, I think I have something to offer.

How did the groundwater management act pave the way for groundwater policy in Arizona and across the country?

Back in 1980, there was a real crisis in Arizona from groundwater overdrafting and we decided to enact an entirely new approach. What made that possible was that I was the governor, and we had good leadership in the Arizona Legislature. The president of the Senate and the speaker of the House were both Republicans. The three of us got along very well, and we simply went behind closed doors and negotiated for six months in detail about a comprehensive statute which has governed groundwater until this day.

How were you and other lawmakers able to come to a compromise?

We listened carefully to each other. We invited representatives from agriculture, the mining industry and the cities to join in the negotiations, and it was a very positive atmosphere because we all listened carefully to each other and were willing to make compromises.

Do you feel there's anything that could have been done differently in crafting the Groundwater Management Act?

Well, that was 45 years ago, and in that time, we have seen the need for some changes. The most important one, I think, is to have a program for the rural areas of Arizona. In 1980, the Groundwater Management Act applied mostly to Maricopa, Pinal and Pima counties, with some exceptions, but it was and is basically an urban water management act for central Arizona. It's now time to reach out and attempt to compromise, and enact a statute for the rest of the state.

At the time, why was the Groundwater Management Act mostly focused on urban areas?

That's because of the huge demand from the urban populations, and it's where most of the agriculture was. So it was the immediate problem.

How has everything changed for rural areas in the past 45 years in regards to water usage?

I would say that the biggest change has been the presence of out-of-state companies coming in and establishing huge farms based on groundwater. You can see that most dramatically in Mohave County, the Kingman area and in the Willcox basin in southern Arizona.

What advice would you offer to lawmakers who are trying to pass another act tailored toward rural areas?

There are a number of different bills that have been introduced and debated. To some degree, there are strong points in all of the bills. They differ to some degree in the amount of mandatory conservation, and to some degree in the composition of the local management councils. What we need in the upcoming session is a spirit of compromise. It's a kind of compromise that we had in the last Legislature when they passed the Ag-to-Urban bill. And my hope and expectation is that with a little more effort and careful attention to differing points of view, it should be possible to find a compromise.

What was your impression of the groundwater management proposals that were introduced last session?

Well, there are a number of different ones. They all have some strong points. I would say that one of the major differences has been how much conservation on what timeline, how much is it necessary to mandate the reduction of groundwater use (and) in what quantity there are differences that I think are susceptible to compromise.

What do you think are the biggest obstacles that lawmakers face in trying to get another groundwater management act passed?

I think the main differences relate to the composition of the local management councils and the authority that they would have to adopt management tools and management plans with the participation of the Department of Water Resources. There are differing provisions in the bills. The second major difference, as I see it, is conservation. How stringent should the water reduction proposal amount and deadlines be laid out? Those are, I think, the major differences.

What has been the biggest hindrance with coming to an agreement with the Colorado River negotiations?

The problem is the impasse between the Upper Basin states of New Mexico, Colorado, Utah and Wyoming and the Lower Basin states, which is Arizona, California, Nevada. The Lower Basin states, led by Arizona, have put forward a plan for how to handle drought, which means reducing the amounts of water that are allocated to the water users in the Lower Basin. Under the leadership of Arizona, the Lower Basin states have put forward a very clear, detailed plan that makes substantial concessions in how much water use must be reduced. The basic issue in all of this is there's not enough water to go around. Big cuts are going to have to be made across the entire basin. The issue is how do you share those reductions? Now, the Upper Basin, particularly Colorado, have responded by saying, "It's not our intention to offer reductions," and there's been no serious offer made by the Upper Basin in response to Arizona in the Lower Basin saying, "Here's a proposal for reducing usage by the Lower Basin states."

What will it take for the Upper Basin states and Lower Basin states to actually reach an agreement?

The deadline for agreement is coming up fast. That is, it's next year. Now the states … have been unable to agree, and there's not much indication so far that they're going to make any more progress. That means that the Bureau of Reclamation, that is the Interior Department, now must step in and conduct the negotiations towards conclusion. The first step in that process is going to occur in November. In November, the Department of Interior is going to issue a number of alternative proposals. That's part of the environmental process that must take place over the next year before the existing regulations expire. The existing regulations expire at this time next year so there has to be an agreement, and it looks like the states are unable. They've been talking for years now. That means that the Interior Department must now step in and begin to lead the process. The opening of that process is going to be in November when the department is going to lay out alternative ways of coming to a conclusion. It's going to be controversial, obviously. But the important thing is that the federal government, in the form of the Interior Department, must now take a strong leadership role.



CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

Few protections for elected officials targeted by deepfakes

"This is kind of horrifying," said Senate Minority Leader Priya Sundareshan. "It is exactly what we have all been worried about with the rise of AI."

Deepfake content of political figures is nothing new, but it is becoming more common as artificial intelligence models like Grok by X and Sora by OpenAI make the creation of it more accessible and more realistic. Experts say attempts to regulate content won't keep pace with its evolution, meaning Arizona lawmakers, candidates and elections officials will have to develop their own strategies to combat AI-generated photos and videos.

Michael Moore, the chief information security officer at the Secretary of State's Office, has been helping elected officials and elections administrators prepare for deepfake content aimed at disrupting the state's elections. He says most leaders do not realize how easy it is to create realistic AI-generated content.

"It's not like just the president of the United States is going to have deepfakes of him, it's not like just the governor is going to have deepfakes of her," Moore said. "You can make this of anyone. It could be an elected official, it could be an election official, it could be anyone in your community, like the principal of your kid's school."

Moore said the state did not see an influx of AI-generated threats in 2024, just a few relatively unsophisticated deepfakes. But he does foresee deepfakes becoming a bigger issue during the 2026 midterm elections, now that technology allows anyone with a smartphone to create them.

"My job is to think like a bad guy and then try to defend against it," Moore said. "If I wanted to erode confidence in elections, these are the tools that I would use. It is incredibly challenging to actually mechanically interfere with ballots, it's way easier to negatively impact people's perception and confidence in elections."

Despite the threat deepfakes pose to Arizona's elections, the laws regulating them are relatively lax. The deepfake created of Hobbs, for example, does not violate the two Arizona laws passed in 2024 regarding political deepfakes.

Neither Hobbs' office nor her campaign responded to requests for comment.

Chris McIsaac, a researcher at the nonpartisan R Street Institute, has studied AI policies enacted across the country and said he doesn't view legislation as the answer to combatting deepfakes.

KEY POINTS

- **On Oct. 17, Sen. Wendy Rogers reposted a deepfake video of Gov. Katie Hobbs**
- **Deepfakes do not violate Arizona laws related to content**
- **Experts say elected officials cannot rely on regulation to combat deepfakes**

"It's exceedingly difficult to write a law that is going to capture the current state of technology and certainly where the technology is going," McIsaac said.

One law signed by Hobbs in 2024 requires deepfake creators to include an AI disclosure on manipulated content posted within 90 days of an election. If a politician asks a court to intervene, the creator of the deepfake content will receive a $10 fine per day until the content is removed or reuploaded with a disclosure.

Another law, introduced by Republican Rep. Alex Kolodin of Scottsdale, allows candidates to ask a judge to declare a manipulated photo or video fake. However, the judge cannot require the removal of the content or impose a penalty for its creation.

Kolodin said he doesn't see a need to rush to create more regulations just yet, as his law never ended up needing to be enforced during the 2024 election cycle.

"We've tried the light touch, now let's see how things develop, let's see where things go from here," Kolodin said. "Not everything is a matter for legislation or a crisis that the Legislature needs to respond to. The important thing is simply that voters know the truth."

Sundareshan, who introduced her own deepfake bill that never received a hearing, disagreed. She said the two laws passed in 2024 are just a starting point.

"I'm not so sure that what we ended up passing is going to be very capable of deterring this kind of activity," Sundareshan said.

Some states have attempted harsh crackdowns on AI political content, including outright bans or criminal penalties, according to McIsaac. But those laws are hard to enforce and can run afoul of the First Amendment.

For example, a California law attempting to prohibit online platforms from hosting AI-generated political content ahead of an election was struck down by a federal judge in August. A similar law that required labels on digitally manipulated campaign ads was also overruled.

That limits regulation of deepfakes to disclosures, which McIsaac says is an imperfect solution.

"The question is, are these types of disclosures really going to have an effect?" McIsaac said. "The jury is still out. I don't think there's great examples of those being implemented."

Moore agreed that legislation won't keep up with the rapid evolution of AI, but said he supports disclosures for AI-generated content.

"I think that that would be a very reasonable piece of legislation," Moore said. "People can still have their freedom of speech, but if they're creating masterful impersonations of other people, it being labeled as a deepfake, I think that's a reasonable request."

McIsaac said elected officials and government bodies should instead focus on educating and communicating with voters about AI, as a response to a deepfake on social media is faster than any piece of legislation or court action could be.

"I think a better approach is to think of this as more of a communications exercise and having campaigns figure out ways to quickly counter this false claim that's floating out there and (put) the counterargument out there for why this is false and then (let) the voters decide who they believe," McIsaac said.

Kolodin encouraged anyone who sees deepfake content of him to reach out and ask if it's real. Sundareshan said she and her Democratic colleagues have yet to discuss combatting deepfakes, as she wasn't even aware of how far the technology has come.

"I think it is just not even well understood how real a threat this might be posing to us and we do need to be having the conversations," Sundareshan said.

"This is kind of horrifying. It is exactly what we have all been worried about with the rise of AI."

— Senate Minority Leader Priya Sundareshan

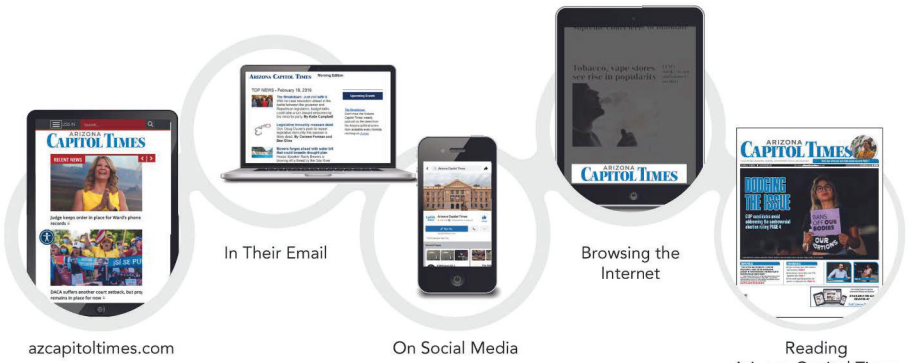
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GUEST COMMENTARIES

Arizona families squeezed as drug costs rise



By Sen. T.J. Shope

Arizona families are getting squeezed by the rising cost of prescription drugs, which have increased three times faster than the rate of inflation during my lifetime.

The impact is especially felt in rural communities, where access to care can already be a challenge for many residents. Too often, simple economics force families to make impossible choices between purchasing the medicines they need or paying for food and rent.

What makes the situation more infuriating is knowing that the cost of new drugs has doubled over the past four years alone, and that U.S. patients often pay more than three times as much for the same medications available in other developed countries. As President Trump said, "in case after case, our citizens pay massively higher prices than other nations pay for the same exact pill."

Fortunately, President Trump is dealing directly with Big Pharma to tackle this crisis. New agreements with drugmakers require them to reduce American drug prices in line with the lowest price paid by consumers in other developed nations. I hope Big Pharma holds up its end of the bargain and reduces prices for U.S. patients, and that these announcements are the first of many steps taken by the pharmaceutical industry to bring relief to the American people.

We live in deeply polarizing times, but frustration with prescription drug costs is a rare issue of bipartisan agreement. A recent survey finds 85% of voters agree their medications have gotten more expensive, and virtually the same percentage of respondents say pharmaceutical companies are mostly to blame.

Likewise, the vast majority of voters across the political spectrum say they support President Trump in his efforts to work with Big Pharma to rein in costs.

This isn't just a matter of dollars and cents. Life expectancy among Americans lags behind that of the rest of the developed world. The problem is worse in rural communities like mine, where — according to a new study — the typical adult male will die two years earlier than if he lived in the city. A host of factors are to blame for this discrepancy, including less access to necessary health care in rural areas. But the cost of health care is also to blame, and prescription drug prices play an outsized part in driving those costs up year after year.

If we're going to reverse this trend, we all have a role to play. Individual responsibility is critical, beginning with people embracing better health habits. State policymakers are making strides to ensure there are enough doctors and nurses in every community across Arizona. And the federal government can and should continue pressing the pharmaceutical industry to ensure Americans get a fair deal when it comes to purchasing the prescription medications they need.

Sen. T.J. Shope, a Republican, is president pro tempore of the Arizona Senate and vice chairman of the Senate Health & Human Services Committee. He lives in Coolidge.

Opening up Arizona's small business retirement options



By Regina Cobb

In my time as state representative, I realized the importance of our local businesses and the vital role they play in making our community what it is today. That is why it is important that our government leaders support small-business owners and their employees in any way they can. One such way is through modernizing the 401(k) retirement framework.

President Trump recently signed an executive order that opens up 401(k) plans to "alternative assets" that previously were not broadly available for typical retirement accounts, such as private equity plans. The goal is simple – hardworking Americans deserve to have access to 401(k) plans that ensure retirement security and help build wealth to achieve the American dream. These types of investments have typically only been available to institutional or wealthy investors. Having this option available to the average worker ensures fairness and equal opportunity.

Over the past few years, more small businesses have been adopting 401(k) plans. In 2024, 54% of businesses employing fewer than 50 employees offered access to a defined contribution plan, such as a 401(k). In 2020, that percentage stood at 47%. It is apparent that more workers are attempting to save for their retirement, and we need to give them the best chance to do that.

Furthermore, there is an appetite for a variety of different investment options that diversify retirement plans, reduce risk, and increase returns. According to a survey released by Schroders, about "45% of investors participating in 401(k), 403b or 457 workplace retirement savings plans say they would invest in private equity and private debt investments." In 2024, that number was 36%. Interest is growing.

There are clear benefits to including private market investments, such as private equity and real estate, in 401(k) plans. According to Mark Uyeda, one of the commissioners at the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), "these investments can offer meaningful diversification and long-term growth potential." Commissioner Uyeda goes on to say that with the proper safeguards put in place by the Department of Labor (DOL) and SEC, employees can "obtain higher risk-adjusted returns on investments and build more resilient retirement portfolios." He also talks about how these investments are regulated by federal laws that aim to prevent fraud, allow independent valuation of assets, and prohibit "false and misleading statements." This adds a strong layer of safety for employees.

Now that the executive order has been issued, the next steps are fairly straightforward. The DOL can write a formal rulemaking that provides the steps businesses can take to offer 401(k) plans with private market investments safely and securely. A rule is the best action the DOL can take, as employers will be more confident in relying on it to limit their liability.

Business owners in Mohave County and across the country can build upon their accomplishments by building retirement plans that offer real security. The DOL can provide the tools needed for small businesses to improve their employees' retirement plans. The momentum is growing. Now it is time to get the president's vision across the finish line.

Regina Cobb is a former state representative for District 5.

CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

Arizona to consider speed-limiting devices to improve road safety

Speeding accounted for about one-third of all total fatalities from vehicle crashes in 2024, according to the Arizona Department of Transportation. More than 20,000 people were injured from speeding-related crashes and an additional 417 people died in 2024, outpacing the number of alcohol-related fatalities that year.

The device would serve as an optional alternative punishment for motorists facing a speeding-related license suspension.

"This is a serious problem, but once again, we're not mandating anybody to do anything," Nguyen said. "If you want to be able to get a limited driver's license to get back to work, you can."

Speed-inhibitor devices use cellular technology to limit a vehicle's top speed and acceleration to the posted speed limit. The technology has been used in the U.S. for decades, but some states, like Arizona, have only recently begun exploring ways to incorporate it into state law.

"It's essentially a dead pedal. You can floor the car and the vehicle just won't accelerate beyond what the posted speed limit is," said Toby Taylor, the chief compliance officer with the Steer Safe Coalition, a partnership between vehicle interlock providers LifeSafer and Smart Start seeking to create legislation for speed limiters across the country.

Drivers are unable to deactivate a speed inhibiting device without uninstalling it from the vehicle. Installing one takes about an hour, Taylor said.

Washington state, Virginia and Washington, D.C., have instituted similar legislation.

A driver would have to pay for the device, which could range between $100 to $250 to install, depending on the year and make of their vehicle. Taylor said using the device costs about $4 per day after installation.

Speed-limiting devices do have their own limitations. The devices can't slow a vehicle, meaning a driver with a speed limiter could still speed if they enter a dynamic speed zone, such as a school zone or construction area. In that instance, the responsibility is on the driver to reduce their speed.

Washington state's law also allows motorists with a speed limiting device to briefly override it for a minute to allow their vehicle to travel 10 miles per hour above the posted speed limit. Taylor said this feature allows drivers to speed up if they need to make an evasive maneuver or comply with some passing laws that allow motorists to drive above the speed limit to pass a vehicle on a two-lane highway.

Nguyen's bill is being reintroduced from the 2025 legislative session. The House Judiciary Committee chairman sponsored House Bill 2786, which failed on the House floor twice during the session.

"I really think we're going to get some bipartisan support on this," Nguyen said. "I think we need to be clear. We might have been rushing a little bit last year, but I'm a lot calmer this year."

The bill received bipartisan support during the session, but a majority of Republicans first voted against it on March 6, and then a majority of Democrats voted against it on March 11, killing the bill for the session.



Rep. Quang Nguyen, R-Prescott Valley, speaks to reporters on Oct. 27 about his future bill that would allow courts to order speed-inhibiting devices to motorists facing a potential suspension of their driver's license. (Jakob Thorington / Arizona Capitol Times)

KEY POINTS

- **Arizona lawmaker proposes bill to limit excessive speeders**
- **Speeding accounted for one-third of vehicle crash fatalities in 2024**
- **Arizona would start a competitive bidding process for approved device providers**

Republicans affiliated with the Arizona Freedom Caucus voted against the bill both times it was introduced on the floor. Rep. Rachel Keshel, R-Tucson, said during the House's March 11 vote that she was worried it could be amended to further restrict motorists in the future by different legislators if it was signed into law.

"I see this legislation as potentially being nanny-state legislation, which is anti-freedom," Keshel said.

Nguyen said some of the opposition to his bill stemmed from a misunderstanding by his colleagues that a driver would be forced to install a speed limiter in their vehicle if a court ordered them to do so, but that is not his intention with the legislation.

"If you decide not to opt in, you simply just stay home, not worrying about driving at all. We're not forcing anybody to do anything," he said.

HB2786 had different durations of how long a defendant would be required to have a speed inhibitor installed, depending on the offense. A driver cited for racing on a highway would be subject to the device for 90 days; 180 days for drivers cited for a first offence of driving more than 100 hours per hour; 180 days for a second speeding citation within 12 months; one year if a driver is facing a one-year license suspension; and one year for a second offence of racing on highways.

If the bill becomes law next session, Arizona would launch a competitive procurement process for companies to bid and become approved providers of devices that can be used.

ECONOMY

Arizona food pantries brace for holiday surge amid SNAP benefits delay

BY ELLIS PRESTON, *Epreston@stateaffairs.com*

With nearly 900,000 Arizonans facing the loss of food stamps as of Nov. 1, state officials have been scrambling to prepare already-strained food pantries for the upcoming holiday surge.

The increase in demand follows the announcement that the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, more colloquially known as food stamps or SNAP, will not be able to provide continued assistance to its 42 million users nationally amid the federal government shutdown.

"It's especially cruel to do this in November, the month of Thanksgiving, of course, when our forefathers came together to celebrate the bounty of the harvest being shared among all Americans," Arizona Attorney General Kris Mayes said in a press conference on Oct. 28 . "That is the opposite of what the president is doing."

Chris Firmage, a spokesperson for the Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona, said he expects demand on the food bank to increase as the SNAP cut-off comes at a time of rising food insecurity and unpaid federal employees.

"The holidays are always the busiest time of year, so we're concerned with expected influx," Firmage said.

Danielle McMahon, the chief operations officer of St. Vincent de Paul, said the organization is preparing for an increase in people in November as the holiday season approaches.



St. Mary's Food Bank of Arizona volunteer Kayli Iverson, right, and Josh Torres, left, a St. Mary's Food Bank employee delivers food to a car at the main facility, Oct. 28, 2025, in Phoenix. (AP Photo/Ross D. Franklin)

"It's going to be really stressful and difficult for families and for individuals," McMahon said. "The holidays are a time where you're wanting to celebrate, wanting to feed your family, wanting to make it special, and people are going to struggle to do that."

McMahon said they were relying on the community to mobilize through volunteering and donations to mitigate the pressure that will come with the loss of benefits. McMahon said with the media attention SNAP has already gotten, people are starting to step up.

"We definitely need the community to activate, to help one another," McMahon said. "If people are in a situation where they can give back, lend their time, lend their resources, we need them now more than ever."

Tom McKinney, the CEO of Interfaith Community Services, said that the food pantry is already feeling the effects of the loss of benefits over the past week. In addition to a larger number of people, McKinney said many of those coming to the pantry are brand new or haven't been there in over a year.

"We've got cars backed up to the street," McKinney said.

McKinney said conversations need to happen among the government to get SNAP refunded, as its inactivity has just worsened what he already considered a "food crisis."

On Oct. 28, Mayes announced she — along with 21 other attorneys general and three governors — was suing the federal government for allegedly illegally suspending SNAP benefits.

"Despite USDA's claim of insufficient funds, the agency has access to billions of dollars in SNAP-specific contingency funds appropriated by Congress for this very purpose," a press release from Mayes' office said. "Furthermore, USDA has funded other programs with emergency funds during this shutdown, but has refused to fund SNAP, leaving millions of Americans without the assistance they need to buy food."

KEY POINTS

- **Food stamps unavailable in Arizona from Nov. 1, impacting 900,000 people**
- **Federal government shutdown halts funding for SNAP benefits nationwide**
- **Gov. Katie Hobbs requests local retailers and grocers to donate food**

The United States Department of Agriculture has about $5 billion in contingency funds for SNAP benefits but has not deemed the shutdown worthy of their use.

Mayes also called on the Arizona state government to use the state's $1.6 billion rainy day fund to pay for the benefits until the government is no longer shut down.

"If this is not a rainy day, I am not really sure what is," Mayes said.

Mayes said she was disappointed in how Arizona had been handling the problem and suggested the state call in the National Guard to assist food pantries in handing out food.

McKinney said staffing is not a problem for the food banks, as they have many volunteers. What they really need is monetary donations, McKinney said.

On Oct. 29, Gov. Katie Hobbs announced that the state was donating $1.5 million to help fund SNAP benefits for November.

The announcement came after Hobbs said Arizona did not have sufficient financial resources to truly assist people during the benefits pause.

"The state of Arizona does not have the money to backfill the disastrous decisions being made by Washington Republicans," Hobbs said. "But I am taking every action possible to mitigate the damage done to everyday people in our state."

In the press release, Hobbs said Arizona usually receives $150 million in federal food stamp funding, and she recognized how much her donation falls short by comparison. In the press release, she asked Arizona retailers and grocers to also donate food to help the community.

"As someone who at times has relied on food stamps to get by, it is devastating to imagine what Arizona families are going through as they try to put food on the table for their families," Hobbs said in the press release. "President Trump must act today to ensure veterans, seniors and vulnerable children in Arizona don't go hungry this November."

ECONOMY



A person reaches to plug in an electric vehicle at a charging station May 22, 2025, in the city of Commerce, Calif. (AP Photo/Jae C. Hong, File)

Charging stations and EV's on the rise across Arizona

BY JAMAR YOUNGER, *jyounger@stateaffairs.com*

State and local agencies and governments are pushing forward with plans to convert fleet vehicles to electric and install public charging stations despite the federal government's efforts to curtail electric vehicle mandates and expansion.

The Arizona Department of Transportation, along with cities and counties across the state, has either installed or plans to install charging stations on government-owned property and on highways to increase accessibility for electric vehicle owners.

Some cities and counties have also replaced aging government fleet vehicles with electric and hybrid vehicles, with plans to acquire more electric vehicles.

The agencies and municipalities have developed electric vehicle and infrastructure plans for public electric chargers even as President Donald Trump's administration ended a tax credit program for new and used electric vehicles.

The Trump administration also temporarily paused the National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure program this summer, which provides money to states to install electric vehicle chargers, before resuming it.

The Arizona Department of Transportation is receiving $76.5 million from the program to eventually build up to 74 rapid-charging stations along the state's highways.

ADOT recently announced it is seeking bids from private companies to build and operate 34 electric charging stations along Interstates 10 and 40, U.S. Routes 60, 89, 93 and 160, and state routes 64, 68, 80, 87, 90, 95, 260 and 347.

The department approved an initial round of charger locations in August 2024, totaling 18 stations along Interstates 8, 10, 17, 19 and 40.

All of the stations will be privately owned and operated, with the federal money covering up to 80% of the cost and the private developer paying for at least 20% of the eligible project costs, according to ADOT.

Although the state is primed to grow the number of charging stations, the number of drivers who purchased electric vehicles decreased in October after the expiration of the tax credits.

KEY POINTS

- **Arizona agencies push forward with electric vehicle plans despite federal efforts to curtail mandates**
- **Arizona Department of Transportation plans to install 74 rapid-charging stations along state highways**
- **Arizona agencies estimate $44 million in savings by transitioning to electric vehicles**

According to J.D. Power, electric vehicles accounted for 5.2% of vehicle sales down from almost 13% in September.

Despite the drop, there is still an incentive for consumers and governments to purchase electric vehicles due to an overall cost savings, said Diane Brown, executive director of Arizona Public Interest Research Group (Arizona PIRG), which has advocated for local governments to integrate electric vehicles into fleets.

"Momentum is on the side of transportation electrification. Arizona has seen businesses start up and employ individuals leading to good jobs, and drivers of EVs have noted financial savings, as well as benefits to air quality and public health," Brown said.

The Arizona PIRG Education Fund, the Nature Conservancy in Arizona and Frontier Group estimate that state agencies can save about $44 million over the next decade by transitioning to electric vehicles.

Brown said electric vehicle registrations in the state have increased over the years and several of the state's largest municipalities have doubled or tripled the total number of electric vehicles in their fleets.

The city of Phoenix's fleet includes 100 electric vehicles across multiple departments and more than 400 charging ports that are open to city employees, fleet vehicles and the public, according to city officials.

"While recent federal and state policy changes have created uncertainty for local governments, Phoenix continues to move forward with its clean fleet and infrastructure goals as outlined in the Transportation Electrification Action Plan (TEAP) and Climate Action Plan (CAP)," according to a statement from the city.

The city plans to expand to 500 city-owned chargers and 200 electric vehicles in its fleet by 2030, according to the statement.

The city was also awarded $15 million through the federal Charging and Fueling Infrastructure Program under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to support new charging sites, especially in underserved neighborhoods, but those funds remain on hold pending a federal review, according to the city.

"Our commitment to sustainability remains strong regardless of changes at the federal level. Investing in EV infrastructure not only helps improve air quality and public health but also supports long-term economic growth and resilience for Phoenix residents," said Karen Apple, the electric vehicle program manager for the city of Phoenix.

The city of Tucson has 85 electric vehicles with plans to add six more, while Sun Tran, the city's transit service, has 10 electric buses in service with 10 more planned, according to city officials.

Sun Tran also received support from Tucson Electric Power to install 10 electric bus chargers, according to TEP spokesman Joseph Barrios.

TEP has also supported the city of Tucson and Pima County through its electrification program, which advises and supports governments and agencies that are looking to transition their fleets to electric vehicles and install charging infrastructure, Barrios said.

Pima County currently operates 137 electric vehicles and plans to acquire 65 electric or hybrid vehicles over the next several years, said Pima County Services Director Leonard Boswell in a statement.

"For the current fiscal year, the focus will be on procuring hybrid vehicles, which aligns with our long-term strategy and does not alter our existing acquisition plan," Boswell said.

ECONOMY



Ranchers warn against government interference in beef market

Beef cattle stand in pens at the livestock market in Canuelas, Argentina's main cattle trading hub, Oct. 21, 2025. (AP Photo/Rodrigo Abd)

BY JAMAR YOUNGER
jyounger@stateaffairs.com

A couple of Arizona's agricultural groups are calling on the federal government to reconsider its plan to import beef from Argentina in an effort to lower prices.

The Arizona Farm Bureau and the Arizona Cattle Growers' Association have raised concerns that the proposal could cause market interference at a time when cattle herds are at historically low levels and ranchers are contending with drought, high feed and supply costs, and low crop prices, according to the groups.

The organizations have joined other agricultural groups and lawmakers across the country who have panned the plan from President Donald Trump to quadruple Argentinian beef imports.

"This will do little to reduce beef prices for consumers because even if Argentinian beef imports were doubled, it would still represent only a small fraction of overall imports so (it) would not, in effect, reduce prices at the grocery store," according to an Arizona Cattle Growers' Association press release. "Government involvement in the free market never ends well and sets a perilous precedent for all commodities. Our country is based on the free market of goods and should not be so directly manipulated."

Ranchers attributed the price increases to the low numbers of cattle, which they say have been exacerbated by drought, regulatory burdens and reductions in the amount of available federal land available for ranching.

KEY POINTS

- **Arizona agricultural groups oppose beef imports from Argentina**
- **Low cattle herds and drought cause market interference concerns, high prices**
- **The US Department of Agriculture plans to lower prices by increasing grazing allotments nationwide**

"It's the decreased amount of cattle in the United States, which has contributed to an increase in price. So … it's a basic supply and demand cycle," said Ben Menges, a rancher who serves as president of the Graham County Farm Bureau and is a member of the Cattle Growers' Association's board.

Cattle ranchers have struggled to make a profit, which has also kept cattle numbers low, said rancher Brian DeGanahl, who is president of the Arizona Cattle Growers' Association.

"The rancher is not going to increase his cow numbers unless he's making a profit," DeGanahl said. "And that's another reason for these low cattle numbers. It just hasn't been a profitable business for a decade now."

The agricultural groups have proposed opening more land to permittees, which they say could increase the number of cattle farmers and herds, lowering beef prices.

"For the last 40-plus years, we've been on a trajectory of limiting what ranchers can do, federal grazing leases and allotments between the (U.S.) Forest Service, between the Bureau of Land Management land," said John Boelts, president of the Arizona Farm Bureau. "A lot of those restrictions were unnecessary. They were for arbitrary reasons and they certainly weren't for using the land to the best of its ability."

The U.S. Department of Agriculture appears to be heeding the recommendations of agricultural groups after announcing a plan last week to increase access to grazing allotments, streamlinee permitting and authorizations, and implement other initiatives intended to grow cattle herds and boost domestic and international demand.

The agricultural groups have expressed confidence that these proposals will ultimately lead to lower prices and reduce the need for the government to import foreign beef.

"I think we need to look at the challenges we have in public policy, on the labor front, on the infrastructure front, on getting public lands and our federal lands, making them all working lands again, all those sorts of things," Boelts said. "Solving problems for ranchers and livestock processing plants for labor, solutions, looking to grow, build and produce more in this country will have lasting value for the consumers."

HOUSING

Slowdown in Arizona housing permits, median home price holds at $447K

BY JAKOB THORINGTON
jthorington@stateaffairs.com



In this Jan. 12, 2015 photo, a builder works on a new apartment building under construction in Phoenix. (AP Photo/Ross D. Franklin)

Housing permits issued in Arizona are at the lowest annual pace since 2019, but prices are continuing to sit at just under half a million dollars.

The number of both single-family and multi-family building permits approved has dropped over the past year, according to the Joint Legislative Budget Committee's October fiscal highlights report.

The report's latest numbers track a 12-month rolling total through August. From August 2024 to August 2025, there were 36,455 single-family building permits issued in the state, which is nearly a 12% decrease from the previous August's 12-month total.

Multi-family building permits have had an even greater drop off in the same time period, at over 30%, with 14,582 multi-family permits issued.

And while building appears to be slowing, home prices have remained about the same for nearly three years.

The median sale price of a home in Arizona in September was $447,000, according to the real estate brokerage Redfin. That price is slightly higher than September 2024's median sale price of $441,000 and a 7% increase from September 2022's median sale price of $431,000.

"Prices are too high. Development is slowing and we do have a policy tool for fixing that and that policy tool is the zoning and permitting requirements," said Glenn Farley, director of policy and research at the Common Sense Institute.

The U.S. Census Bureau does not have updated permit data through September due to the federal government shutdown. The bureau's August 2024 report listed 7,771 more total units to date than its August 2025 report, also showing a decline in housing permits issued.

The Common Sense Institute also concluded the number of housing permits issued in the state is on the decline, tracking a 12% decrease of permits issued in 2025 from the previous year in its Sept. 18 housing report.

At an estimated pace of just under 52,000 total housing unit permits for the year, Common Sense Institute's report notes that would be the slowest pace of annual housing permits approved in the state since 2019.

Farley said the state's current pace is still higher than it was following the Great Recession up to the COVID pandemic, which resulted in an accelerated pace of housing permits issued.

"We're not there anymore. We were there for a while after the pandemic, but not for very long," Farley said. "We certainly need to build more units."

Potential homebuyers could see some relief in mortgage rates after the Federal Reserve cuts its interest rate for the second time in two months.

The Associated Press reported Oct. 29 that the Federal Reserve lowered its key interest rate by a quarter-point to about 3.9%, which could reduce borrowing costs for mortgages and other loans over time.

KEY POINTS

- **Arizona housing permits issued at lowest pace since 2019**
- **Single-family permits dropped nearly 12% over the past year**
- **The Federal Reserve's interest rate cut may offer relief to potential homebuyers**

At the state policy level, Farley recommended that cities and towns take action to make it cheaper to get permits approved and to lower the cost of building housing units, such as requiring fewer specific design elements for approval.

Senate Bill 1229, the "Arizona Starter Homes Act," proposed to eliminate several design regulations in the permitting process, but the bill never made it to the governor's desk in 2025 and was opposed by the state's cities and towns, which argued that there's no guarantee in the legislation that homes would be sold to Arizona residents instead of corporate investors.

The League of Arizona Cities and Towns attributes permitting delays to non-municipal reasons, including subdivision process issues and the approval process from federal, state and county agencies.

The Legislature in 2025 also chose not to renew the state's Low-Income Housing Tax Credit program, which was implemented to help develop affordable rental housing units.

Arizona Housing Coalition Executive Director Nicole Newhouse said she expects the discontinuation of the program to hurt rural communities, since housing developers will have lost the incentive to build more units in areas with lower median incomes than in metropolitan areas.

"We've been working for the last three years to renew this program to no avail," Newhouse said. "Last session was perhaps the hardest. We will be the first state in these United States that created a state LIHTC program and then allowed it to sunset."

Farley said the Common Sense Institute is waiting until the new year to examine more data on how the state's pause on new home construction in some areas of the Valley has affected housing supply in places like Queen Creek and Buckeye.

The Goldwater Institute is representing the state's Home Builders Association of Central Arizona, which is currently suing the Arizona Department of Water Resources over rules that have paused new home construction in areas where a developer can't show there's a groundwater supply of at least 100 years.

"We know that the supply end of things is critical in making housing affordable," said Rep. Stephanie Stahl Hamilton, D-Tucson. "It's not solely building affordable units, but if there's enough supply on the market, prices will come down and it will free up."

EDUCATION

Arizona risks $866M in federal funding over DEI teaching standards

BY KIERA RILEY
kriley@stateaffairs.com

With a threat to cut federal education funding, the Arizona Department of Education is looking to remove any language from teaching standards perceived as falling under the federal government's definition of diversity, equity and inclusion.

Earlier this year, the U.S. Department of Education issued a memorandum deeming any diversity, equity and inclusion programs that "advantage one's race over another" to be in violation of Title IV of the Civil Rights Act and to create grounds to revoke federal funding.

The U.S. Department of Education has not cut funds over diversity, equity and inclusion yet nor made any direct threats to Arizona, but the Arizona Department of Education continues to try to weed out any language, programs or actions that could teeter into potential violations of the Civil Rights Act under the new federal interpretation.

Since the initial warning, the Arizona Department of Education created an online list of schools found to be out of compliance with federal directives and has reported those school districts for alleged violations.

And now, looking beyond districts and charters, the state Department of Education, at a State Board of Education meeting on Oct. 27, is seeking to conform teaching and English Language Learner educator training standards with federal directives, citing an estimated $866 million at stake.

"We're facing the possibility of an axe falling on $800 million dollars," Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Horne said. "All we're asking is to get started."

Board members declined to take any action yet, opting instead to table the issue until the December board meeting. And though open to the idea, members expressed a need for additional information on upcoming changes to national standards, the department's plan to convene a stakeholder committee to take on the revisions and a general hesitancy to rush the process.

"I do want to comply with the federal government, but the letter is the law and the spirit of the law is that we do it right so that our compliance is done in a way that's transparent and correct and not a knee jerk," board member Jacqui Clay said.

The Arizona Professional Teaching Standards serve as the foundation for educator preparation programs, professional development and teacher evaluations and lay out a long list of expectations for teachers, with a focus on learner development and differences, learning environments, content knowledge and application, assessment, instruction and professional and ethical practices.

Associate Superintendent Sid Bailey told the board he was not a "prophet" in outlining exactly what changes to the standards would look like, but an example provided cut out words like "equitably," or phrases like "responsiveness to the cultural backgrounds and differing perspectives."



(RDNE Stock Project / Pexels)

KEY POINTS

- **Arizona Department of Education seeks to cut DEI from teaching standards**
- **US Department of Education claims DEI programs violate Title IV**
- **Board members fear revisions going too far, superintendent fears loss of funds**

The department's general plan would be to convene a stakeholder committee from across the state, including superintendents, principals, and teachers, to walk through and make line-by-line revisions.

Bailey said the "primary focus is to be sure that we aren't doing anything to cause hate and discontentment between us and the federal government."

Board member Katherine Wiebke also noted the national standards could also be revised sometime soon, which could complicate the refinement of state standards.

"I would hate to convene a committee only to have the standards we're looking at to be revised in short order," Wiebke said.

Member Jason Catanese stressed the same concern, floating the possibility of waiting until the national standards are revised to update state plans.

Horne said the department needed to get started sooner rather than later, and reiterated it's ultimately up to the board to approve any proposed changes.

"We're not asking anybody to jump into anything, we're asking to be authorized to start work on something that's part of a very long process," Horne said. "We don't want to find ourselves flat footed in the middle of a situation where we're in crosshairs and we haven't done the work."

The department also asked to delve into the Structured English Immersion Endorsement Course Frameworks, or guidance for educators teaching students who are learning English, also known as English Language Learners or ELL students.

Senior Deputy Associate Superintendent Adela Santa Cruz similarly referenced the federal government's focus on compliance and noted the potential to cut existing DEI "verbiage."

Santa Cruz provided an example that struck an entire section on behaviors and expectations, with a redline through provisions dealing with cultural influence, competency, diversity, responsiveness, and the social-emotional and cultural needs of students.

Board members urged a broad cross-section of stakeholders to weigh in on revisions to instruction and raised problems with the example revisions to start.

"We use the words diversity, equity, inclusion and I think if I asked five people what that means five people would say something different," Wiebke said. "Typically, what I have is diversity, equity, inclusion means diverse, it means equal, it means inclusion. We just use the same words. I think it's much more nuanced than that. There's things crossed out here that I just don't see how that matches that language."

Santa Cruz said they would start with a list of ELL educators and open it up to stakeholders from all fifteen counties, with assured full disclosure to the board.

"It's not a secret. It's not something we're trying to do to undermine anyone. What we're trying to do here is to make sure that we have done everything possible to ensure that a process is in place that is going to be for our English Language Learners and very importantly to ensure that we do not jeopardize in any way those federal monies for our students."

Wiebke successfully made the case for delaying both votes to the next board meeting in early December to get more fulsome answers from the department.

Corr said he wanted to ensure the aim of revisions was clearly articulated before the department and its prospective committees dive into the issue.

"Without a very clear charge … we have a very real possibility of overshooting, of going too far and being destructive," Corr said.

Horne still stressed a measure of urgency, voting no on both motions to table the decision.

"The charge is avoiding an $800 million cut to our budget for our students," Horne said.

EDUCATION

"EVIT has never explained how it intends to use the considerable additional funding it proposes withholding from the Districts for the Districts' benefit."

— Vidula Patki, attorney for the schools wrote

School districts plan to sue EVIT over proposed funding cuts to technical programs



Two students of the East Valley Institute of Technology's culinary training program. (FILE - courtesy of East Valley Institute of Technology)

BY KIERA RILEY, *kriley@stateaffairs.com*

Nine school districts plan to sue the East Valley Institute of Technology, claiming a funding structure proposed by the career technical education district short changes programs offered on school campuses.

In negotiating the terms of an intergovernmental agreement, EVIT proposed a decrease in the percentage of state funds passed through to member school districts to run satellite programs, or CTE classes offered on school campuses rather than at EVIT's central campus.

The CTED opted to provide additional funding only if school districts met certain performance benchmarks.

But school districts, which bear the cost of running a satellite CTE program, argue that the current proposal fails to properly reimburse districts and disproportionately benefits EVIT.

"EVIT has never explained how it intends to use the considerable additional funding it proposes withholding from the Districts for the Districts' benefit," Vidula Patki, attorney for the schools wrote.

Meanwhile, EVIT leadership claims the proposed changes to reduce funding and implement performance metrics stem from a need for greater accountability, and in negotiations, the CTED claimed that nothing in state law sets a minimum for allocating satellite funding.

"CTE has the ability to truly change the lives of our students, but it needs to be done fiscally responsibly," EVIT Superintendent Chad Wilson said. "We talk about this being a financial issue, but it's also really a performance issue. What EVIT wanted to do is to increase the performance of our students at both the central and the satellite campus, while at the same time being far more attuned to where the dollars are being spent."

Career technical education districts and school districts are required by state law to sort out finances, oversight and responsibility through intergovernmental agreements.

Part of this pact requires EVIT to pass through and pay districts a percentage of state average daily membership funding to support satellite programs.

Under the prior agreement, EVIT agreed to fund 85% of districts in fiscal year 2023, 86% in 2024, and 87% in 2025, and, historically, according to the district's complaint, all prior IGAs have ranged from 79% to 87%.

KEY POINTS

- **School districts plan to sue career technical education facility over funding agreement**
- **Districts claim CTE programs run on campus are not receiving fair share of funds**
- **East Valley Institute of Technology claims change improves accountability**

The most recent IGA expired at the end of June. And in proposals, districts sought a 90% passthrough rate, while EVIT sought to decrease funding each fiscal year, starting with a 4% cut to 83% in the first year.

In the second year, EVIT would reduce funding again to 78%, though with the offer for an additional 1% if 75% of EVIT satellite programs have persistence rates of at least 30% and another 1% if 100% of instructors satisfy a metric set out in the Industry Related Educational Effectiveness quality indicator.

The percentage would drop an additional 3% to 75% in the next fiscal year, though again with increased funding contingent on specific metrics.

In the third year, districts could receive an additional 2% by reaching 32% persistence rates, another 1% if at least 70% of students enrolled in the final course of a program earn a certificate, and another 1% if instructors hit the benchmark for educational effectiveness.

EVIT and the districts continued to negotiate, securing an extension of the current IGA until the end of August.

Since then, however, negotiations have stalled and parties have lawyered up.

The districts claimed the reduction in funding violated state law requiring a proportionate share between the two, but EVIT contended nothing in statute "requires the CTED to distribute any minimum amount of satellite ADM funding to member districts."

On Oct. 24, Patki and Andrew Pappas, attorneys for the school districts, sent a demand letter threatening legal action if EVIT did not agree to a clean extension of the past IGA through FY2026, negotiate with districts collectively on outstanding terms and agree to wrap up negotiations by December.

After convening in executive session on Oct. 28, the board unanimously rejected the district's counsel and greenlit its own counsel to defend EVIT in court.

In response to the demand letter, Trish Stuhan, attorney for EVIT, claimed the existing funding structure "fails to ensure fiscal responsibility, accountability, and the high standards expected by EVIT's students, families, and taxpayers."

And, given an expired agreement, EVIT's counsel informed the districts they would no longer be making quarterly payments. Though Stuhan noted the EVIT governing board voted to allow districts to use money in its CTED Fund 596 account to keep satellite programs going this school year.

"Although EVIT regrets that the Districts have chosen litigation over continued negotiation, EVIT is prepared to mount a vigorous defense," Stuhan wrote.

Counsel for Apache Junction, Cave Creek, Chandler, Fountain Hills, Gilbert, Higley, J.O. Combs, Tempe Union and Queen Creek school districts noted a plan to file by Oct. 29. At the time of deadline, the districts had yet to file a complaint in Maricopa County Superior Court.

"EVIT does not have limitless discretion to determine how much funding generated by satellite CTE enrollment to pass on to the Districts," attorney Andrew Pappas wrote. "To the contrary, EVIT may retain only that portion of the funding generated by satellite courses that it uses to support the satellite programs, and it must seek the Districts' assent regarding the portion of funding it retains."

Though nine districts sued, three, Mesa Public Schools, Scottsdale Unified School District and American Leadership Academy, have agreed to the IGA.

FROM OTHER STATES

NEWS OF INTEREST FROM ACROSS THE NATION

Alabama

ROSA PARKS AND HELEN KELLER STATUES UNVEILED AT CAPITOL

MONTGOMERY — Statues of Rosa Parks and Helen Keller were unveiled on the grounds of the Alabama Capitol. The monuments honoring the two Alabama natives are the first statues of women placed on the state Capitol grounds. Known as the mother of the Civil Rights Movement, Parks helped ignite the Montgomery Bus Boycott by refusing to give up her seat to a white passenger on a segregated bus. Keller was an activist for the disabled after a childhood illness left her blind and deaf. She learned to communicate through sign language and Braille and became a famous author and lecturer.

California

GOP VOTERS BRACE FOR LOSS OF REPRESENTATION

REDDING — Conservative voters in Northern California are alarmed that a ballot measure designed to diminish Republican representation could pass in November. Ranchers and farmers in the rural region fear the passage of Proposition 50 will further dilute what little political power they possess in the heavily Democratic state. The Democratic proposal to redraw U.S. House maps is intended to oust five GOP members to counter moves by President Donald Trump to gain five Republican seats elsewhere. If it passes, Trump supporters in three northern counties would become part of a new district, paired with populous liberal coastal communities that could dominate in elections.

Colorado

FEDS SAY COLORADO WOLVES MUST COME FROM U.S., NOT CANADA

FORT COLLINS — The Trump administration is telling the state of Colorado it can no longer import wolves from Canada. That's according to a recent letter to Colorado wildlife officials from Brian Nesvik, director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Colorado has been importing wolves from Oregon and British Columbia since 2023 and plans to reintroduce more Canadian wolves this winter. Nesvik says the wolves can only come from states in the northern Rockies region, most of which have been unwilling to provide wolves to Colorado. Colorado officials say they're communicating with Fish and Wildlife about how to allow more wolf reintroductions in the state.



FILE - President Nicolas Maduro flashes victory signs during Indigenous Day in Caracas, Venezuela, Oct 12, 2025. (AP Photo/ Ariana Cubillos, File)

Florida

US SOUGHT TO LURE PILOT INTO BETRAYING VENEZUELAN LEADER

***MIAMI* — A federal agent had a daring plan: persuade Nicolas Maduro's chief pilot to surreptitiously divert the Venezuelan president's plane to a place where U.S. authorities could nab the strongman. His plan had all the ingredients of a Cold War spy thriller – luxury private jets, a secretive meeting at an airport hangar and high stakes diplomacy in a delicate dance to lure a loyal Maduro lieutenant to switch sides. There was even a final bit of intrigue aimed at rattling Maduro about the pilot's true loyalties. More broadly, the scheme reveals the extent — and often slapdash fashion — to which the U.S. has for years sought to topple Maduro.**

Illinois

JUDGE ORDERS DAILY MEETINGS WITH BORDER PATROL OFFICIAL

CHICAGO — A federal judge has ordered a senior U.S. Border Patrol official to meet her daily "to hear about how the day went" after weeks of confrontations between immigration agents and the public in the Chicago area. U.S. District Judge Sara Ellis also told Greg Bovino to produce all use-of-force reports from agents involved in Operation Midway Blitz since Sept. 2. The sweeps have produced more than 1,800 arrests and complaints of excessive force. The judge expressed concerns about video and photos. Ellis noted the sudden deployment of tear gas during a weekend Halloween event.

Indiana

GOVERNOR CALLS SESSION TO REDRAW US HOUSE MAPS

Indiana Republican Gov. Mike Braun has called a special session and directed state lawmakers to redraw the state's congressional districts. The move follows weeks of pressure from the White House to back President Donald Trump's bid to help Republicans maintain control of the U.S. House. Braun scheduled the session to start Nov. 3. Virginia's Democratic-led General Assembly also is meeting in a special session as a first step toward congressional redistricting. Pressure for redistricting is also mounting in both Republican-led Kansas and Democratic-led Illinois. Redistricting already has been taken up by legislatures in Republican-led Texas, Missouri and North Carolina, as well as Democratic-led California.

Kentucky

GOP OFFICIAL'S SOCIAL MEDIA POST OF THE OBAMAS DRAWS BACKLASH

FRANKFORT — A local Republican leader in Kentucky has drawn a strong backlash after sharing a social media video depicting former President Barack Obama and his wife as apes. The post by Bobbie Coleman, chairwoman of the Hardin County Republican Party, was condemned as "vile and reprehensible" by state GOP Chairman Robert Benvenuti III. The state party is investigating and he promised the "harshest action available to us" against those involved. Coleman confirmed sharing the video on the Hardin County GOP's Facebook page. Coleman said the video was deleted and an apology was made before the state GOP weighed in with its statement.

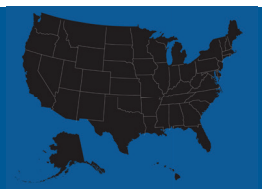
Louisiana

JURY AWARDS $40M TO FAMILY OF MAN WHO DIED IN PRIVATELY-RUN JAIL

NEW ORLEANS — A federal jury found a private corrections company running a Louisiana jail liable for the 2015 death of a man who died of head injuries he sustained while in custody and awarded the family more than $40 million in damages. Moore died from head injuries sustained while detained at Richwood Correctional Center, run by LaSalle Management Company, court records show. The jury found three guards liable for negligence, battery and excessive force against Moore and that the negligence of at least one guard caused his death.

FROM OTHER STATES

NEWS OF INTEREST FROM ACROSS THE NATION



Maine

2 STATES LATEST FRONTS IN VOTING BATTLES

PORTLAND — Maine and Texas are the latest states where Republicans are pushing ballot initiatives targeting noncitizen voting, which is rare. Maine's initiative on the Nov. 4 ballot seeks to require voter ID, restrict absentee voting and limit drop boxes. In Texas, a Republican-backed measure would add wording to the state constitution specifically prohibiting voting by anyone who is not a U.S. citizen, even though voting by noncitizens is already illegal. The initiatives are the latest in a wave of voting-related measures since President Donald Trump's false claims about widespread fraud costing him reelection in 2020, with Republican states passing mostly restrictive laws and Democratic ones passing laws to make voting more accessible.

Mississippi

LICENSURE REQUIREMENTS CHANGED FOR SOME PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS

The Mississippi Department of Education has announced new pathways to become certified elementary educators and special educators. Education students can start teaching elementary school classes on a provisional license while taking a new free course to satisfy the Foundation of Reading test requirements. Students must post an 80% upon course completion. The AIM Institute in Omaha, Nebraska, designed the new academic year-long course, which consists of 14 asynchronous learning sections, two in-person training sessions and testing.

Montana

WHY 2 ASBESTOS VICTIMS MAY NEVER RECEIVE $8M JUDGMENT

A federal appeals court is hearing arguments over whether a Texas company can be held liable for the deaths of two Montana asbestos victims. The case alleges that BNSF Railway operated a toxic rail yard in downtown Libby that likely caused the lung disease that led to the deaths of Joyce Walder and Thomas Wells. A federal jury last year directed BNSF to pay each estate $4 million. There are more than 200 cases with similar claims waiting to proceed until the legal questions in this case are settled.

Nevada

JUDGE PAUSES DISQUALIFICATION OF ACTING US ATTORNEY PENDING APPEAL

A federal judge is pausing his disqualification of Sigal Chattah as Nevada's acting U.S. attorney while the Department of Justice appeals the decision. Judge David Campbell ruled that he stood by his disqualification decision, but was staying his earlier ruling as the court "recognizes the deference and respect it should have for the Executive Branch, just as the Executive Branch should have deference and respect for the Judiciary." The ruling means that Chattah will temporarily be able to stay involved in certain cases that her office is prosecuting, while a federal appellate court weighs an appeal from the Department of Justice. Both sides have asked the appeals court to expedite the case.

New Mexico

DEATH PENALTY CASE HALTED DUE TO FEDERAL SHUTDOWN

SANTA FE — A judge halted legal proceedings in a federal death penalty case because the U.S. government shutdown is impeding the defendant's right to legal representation. The recent order temporarily stays the prosecution of 52-year-old Labar Tsethlikai in a string of kidnappings involving sexual abuse and at least two deaths. The case is a centerpiece of efforts to bring justice in cases of missing and murdered individuals in Native American communities. Death penalty cases including Tsethlikai's are especially costly to defend and provide an early warning about escalating impacts of the government shutdown on the judiciary.

Oregon

NATIONAL GUARD DEPLOYMENTS ARE FOCUS OF COURT HEARINGS

No National Guard troops are expected to be deployed in Portland, Oregon, for at least several days, after a temporary federal appeals court decision. Meanwhile a judge in Washington, D.C., is weighing whether to pull more than 2,000 troops off the streets of the nation's capital. The developments are the latest in a head-spinning array of lawsuits and overlapping rulings prompted by Trump's push to send the military into Democratic-run cities despite fierce resistance from mayors and governors. Troop deployment remains blocked in the Chicago area, where all sides are waiting to see if the U.S. Supreme Court intervenes to allow it.

South Dakota

RANCHERS OPPOSE TRUMP'S PLAN TO IMPORT MORE ARGENTINE BEEF

SIOUX FALLS — President Donald Trump's plan to cut record beef prices by importing more meat from Argentina is running into heated opposition from U.S. ranchers who are enjoying some rare profitable years and skepticism from experts who say the president's move probably wouldn't lead to cheaper prices at grocery stores. Major ranching and farming groups all criticized Trump's idea because it would likely hurt American ranchers and feedlot operators. And agricultural economists say that Argentine beef accounts for such a small slice of beef imports that even doubling that wouldn't change prices much.

Texas

CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION WANTS WATER TREATY PART OF TRADE TALKS

Mexico failed to deliver millions of gallons of water to South Texas farmers as required under a 1944 treaty. Now, members of Texas' congressional delegation want the Trump administration to make Mexico's failure part of the upcoming trade negotiations — including new sanctions if necessary. The treaty requires Mexico to deliver 1.75 million acre-feet of water to the U.S. every five years. In exchange, the U.S. gives Mexico 1.5 million acre-feet of water every year. The five-year cycle ended last week with Mexico owing 925,000 acre-feet of water. Mexican officials say an ongoing drought is preventing them from meeting their obligations.

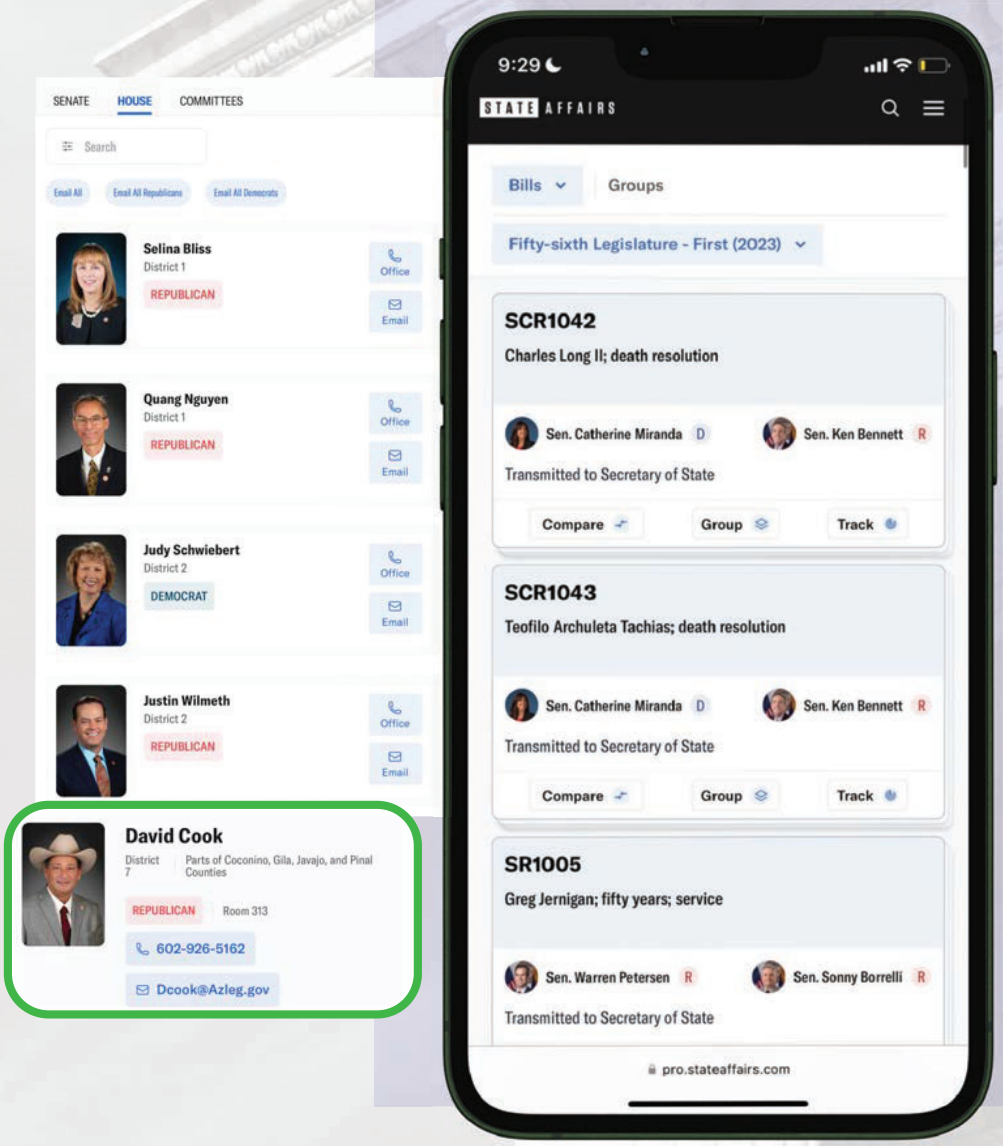
Utah

SUSPECT IN KIRK KILLING CAN WEAR STREET CLOTHES IN COURT

SALT LAKE CITY — A Utah judge has ruled that the 22-year-old man charged with killing Charlie Kirk can appear in court wearing street clothes but must be physically restrained due to security concerns. Attorneys for Tyler Robinson said images of him shackled and in jail clothing would spread widely in a case with extensive media coverage. They argued it could prejudice future jurors. Judge Tony Graf agreed to make some allowances to protect Robinson's presumption of innocence before a trial. Utah prosecutors have charged Robinson with aggravated murder and plan to seek the death penalty. Graf said the charges are extremely serious and present safety concerns, so Robinson must be restrained.

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