

Preview: The Legislature is Coming!

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Several interesting bills have already been filed in the AZ Legislature. The AZLA does not usually cover bills until they have been assigned to a committee or even later when scheduled for a hearing, but a few of the 62 already filed are worth talking about already!!

Monday is the opening day of the AZ Legislature! It is an interesting time to be at the Capitol (10 to about 2) as there usually are multiple advocacy groups distributing material and explaining their programs.

A Few Interesting Bills!

Equal Rights Amendment – No bill has been filed yet, but one will be very soon and will have Democratic and Republican co-sponsors! A big push will be made again this year to get a hearing and to get Arizona to pass it. Why? Isn't this already over? Well, maybe not. If Arizona passes it, we will be the 38th state and that might be all that's needed (3/4), if Congress passes any one of several resolutions extending the time limit on passage. However, some states have recinded their passage, so there will be a lot of issues here. Nevertheless, let's persist! There will be a hearing of the Arizona ERA taskforce January 18, 10 to 11 a.m. at the Capitol in the Executive Tower (west side), third floor. 1700 W. Washington St., Phoenix. The room holds 136 people. Speakers include Sen. Victoria Steele, Rep. Pamela Power-Hannley, Sen. Michelle Ugenti-Rite and others. The idea is to pack the room and have an overflow crowd to show how much

interest there is in this! Here's some additional reading if you are interested.

<https://www.equalrightsamendment.org/incongress>

Education - Several bills have already been filed that probably should be labeled "revenge for the 'RedforEd' movement! Others, provide some hope for charter school reform and reform of the "empowerment scholarship" lack of accountability.

- **HB2015, HB2016, HB2017, HB2018 (prohibit public schools and teachers from walking out or protesting inadequate funding, Kellie Townsend, LD 16).** Rep. Townsend has been quoted as saying the four bills she has introduced are a direct response to the RedforEd movement and teachers' decision to strike last April. [HB2017](#) would prohibit public schools from shutting down except during pre-approved breaks and holidays, or in the event of a variety of dangerous situations, from natural disasters to an invasion or epidemic. This bill also would prohibit schools from coordinating closures. [HB2018](#) would require the attorney general to investigate any policy, procedure or other official action taken by a school district governing board or any district employee that lawmakers allege violates state law. Townsend has also filed [HB2015](#) to prohibit school district employees from using school resources to promote a political or religious ideology, and [HB2016](#) to prohibit employees from harassing, intimidating or harming parents, students and their colleagues. There are laws already on the books to cover each of those offenses. Whether these proposals will intimidate the teacher's movement or whether it will inspire even more activism teachers and their allies remains to be seen.
- [HB2032 \(Charter School Reform Townsend, LD 16\)](#). This bill is one small step toward charter school reform in that it requires charter schools (boards, teachers, everyone) follow open meeting laws which they currently are not required to do!
- [HB2035 - school districts; procurement; charter schools \(Fillmore, LD 16\)](#). What's odd about this bill is that it requires public school districts to follow the same procurement requirements as charter schools – which are less stringent. Probably an effort at "reform" but most of the reports on charter schools show that their procurement requirements are far too lax and too subject to nepotism and other problems.

- **[HB2002](#) - educators; ethics; professional responsibility** – (Finchem, LD11) This is another bill to restrict teachers from engaging in walk outs or other protest movements. It specifies that a code of ethics should be developed by the Arizona School Board Association in conjunction with the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, and then goes on to say exactly what should be in it. No teacher should discuss any legislation, court case, election, public official, executive action, etc. or any controversial subject in their classroom unless it is clearly a core part of the subject matter. The code also would prohibit segregating students on the basis of race or any discussion that one race is responsible for the suffering or injury to another. The bill notes that it is trying to prohibit “teaching for social justice.”
- **[HB2022](#) empowerment scholarships; financial oversight; treasurer (Finchem, LD11)**. HB2022 would require annual audits of the funds allocated through the “empowerment scholarship” programs, and enable the department to contract with a third party to conduct such audits. The problem is this responsibility is assigned to the treasurer department rather than the Department of Education. These are the scholarships that enable students to literally take the money from their public schools and use it to pay tuition at a private or religious school or to be home schooled. Previous sporadic audits have revealed extensive shortcomings in accountability. Audits are needed, but Arizona Assn of School Business Officials lobbyist Chuck Essigs is on record as saying that this responsibility should remain in the Department of Education.

Taxation / Budget Issues – The Governor has promised to cut taxes every year, and has done so, causing extensive injury to public funding for education and other public services. Again, bills are already being introduced to provide more tax credits and to prevent agencies from imposing fees that they need to do their work.

- **[HB2034](#) tax credit; teachers; school supplies (Fillmore, LD 23)**. This proposal has been introduced several times but never passed. It permits teachers to receive a tax credit (a dollar-for-dollar reduction) in their state taxes for school supplies that buy with their own money and then use in the classroom. As with most tax credits, this is certainly a worthy cause, but it is a poor remedy for actually providing education with the money needed to

operate the schools, and it takes money out of the general fund that could be used to increase education funding! Tax credits are a Hobbsian choice, and not a good one for how to run a government.

- [HB2011](#) veterans; increased income tax subtraction (Griffin, LD 14). HB2011 would permit veterans of 20 years or more to exempt more of their current retirement income from state taxes. Currently, veterans can exempt 2500 (that is, not pay taxes on it). This bill if passed would increase that to 6,250 and then on to 10,000. It would cost the state an estimated 15 million when fully implemented.
- **HB2019 highway safety fee; repeal; VLT (Lawrence, LD23).** The state department of motor vehicles increased the fee for new licenses as a way to raise revenue for the highway patrol. This would repeal the \$32 new fee. This is also SB1001 introduced by Ugenti-Rita (LD 23).

Voting, Elections & Democracy – Most of the legislation that makes any progress in Arizona pertaining to expanding voting or protecting democratic processes does not make it even into a hearing. There may be some exceptions this year, as Republican legislators have introduced some bills that may draw bi partisan support.

- [HB2021](#) ballot measures; online signature submittal (Finchem, LD 11). HB2021 would permit persons to sign initiative and referendum petitions on line, rather than the current system which requires circulators to gather hand written signatures on the written document. In Arizona, persons running for office currently can gather the petitions needed to qualify for the ballot using on-line procedures. A person can register to vote on-line. Initiatives and referenda, however, have never been allowed to use on line voting but have become prohibitively expensive by having to find volunteers or paid circulators to corner people in parking lots with their clipboards and printed petitions that grant a tiny place for one's signature. Thousands of signatures are disqualified because they are outside the lines or missing some information or, in some cases, because opponents challenge the petition in court and require circulators to show up for a hearing. If the circulators do not show up – as was the case with the “outlaw dirty money” initiative of

2018 – then ALL the signatures they collected are required, by law, to be thrown out. Thus, this bill would use already-existing software to verify signatures on line, and only those thrown out by the software would be examined by hand. The sponsor, Finchem, says his purpose is NOT to make it easier for citizen initiatives / referenda to gain the required number of signatures, but that the descriptions provided by circulators are too brief and inaccurate whereas signing on line would let the voter actually read the description and know what they were voting on. A second reason he gave is that it takes far too much time for the county recorders to have to verify the signatures when all the petitions are dumped at the final deadline.

- **[HB2039](#) federal form voter registrations; reporting (Townsend, LD 16).**

Arizona has a two-tier voting system. To vote in state elections, a voter has to provide proof of citizenship that includes a government-issued photo ID. A person can obtain a government-issued photo ID if they have a birth certificate or social security card, but many people do not. The Federal voting laws, however, do NOT require a government issued photo id, but other documents can be used and the person swears under threat of perjury that they are a citizen. HB2039 would require county recorders to post the number of persons who cast ONLY the federal ballot.

[HCR2001](#) Article V Convention, electors citizenship (Finchem, LD 11). Here is still another application to Congress to call an “article V convention for the purpose of amending the constitution of the United States. It requires 2/3 of the states to make such an application and the applications must be for exactly the same purpose. If Congress receives such applications from 2/3 of the states they are required to call a constitutional convention. HCR 2001 is a new one, however, as most are for a balanced budget or other restrictions on the federal government. This one would require that electors (those who vote for the president) must show proof of citizenship. It doesn’t say what that means, but typically it means a photo identification issued by a government office.

Mark Your Calendar!

Friday, Jan. 11. Sneak Peak at the Legislature, plus “Request to Speak” Training. Civic Engagement Beyond Voting invites you into the hallowed halls of the Arizona State Legislature on Friday, January 11, for a special

sneak peek and Request to Speak training. [CLICK HERE](#) to RSVP, since space will be limited! Join us for a behind the scenes preview of the Arizona state legislature before the session starts! The event is free and open to all interested.

Environment Advocacy Training – Workshops sponsored by the Sierra Club will cover the basics on the Arizona Legislature and executive branch of government, and Dos and Don'ts of Advocacy at the Legislature. The workshops will also briefly cover some of the expectations for the 2019 legislative session.

Tuesday, January 15, 2019, 6 PM – 8 PM [738 N 5th Ave, Tucson](#) [RSVP](#)

January 19. Anniversary of the Women's March. Check these sites for sites and plans in Arizona:

- <https://azresist.org/event/official-womens-march-phoenix-2019/> or
- <https://www.facebook.com/events/1074015086088388/>
Saturday, Jan. 19 10 to 2. AZ State Capitol.

February 18 (Monday). UUJAZ “Day at the Legislature!” President’s Day. All day event sponsored by Unitarian Universalist Justice Advocacy Network.

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[Valley Unitarian Universalist Congregation](#) –

Senior Minister, Rev. Dr. Andy Burnette; Music Minister, Rev. Kellie Walker; Director of Faith Formation, Marci Beaudoin. Administrator, Sue Ringler. Located: 6400 W. Del Rio Drive, Chandler, AZ 480 899 4249 www.vuu.org
For previous copies of the *Arizona Legislative Alert*, and for all weeks (so far) of the 50 Week Action Plan go to <https://www.vuu.org/legislative-advocacy>. VUU holds services twice on Sunday, one at 9:15 and the second at 11:30 In between are a wide variety of adult and children’s workshops and discussion groups. You are welcome here.

[Unitarian Universalist Justice Arizona Network](#) -- Executive Director Rev. Lisa McDaniel-Hutchings; Policy Coordinator, Anne L. Schneider. Board Members, UUJAZ: Sharon Travis, Liz Swan (Chair), Rev. Matthew Crary, Bobbi Bollinger; Rev. Terry Sims, Molly Divine, and Katie Phares www.uujaz.org.

