



January 6, 2024

PRESERVING ARIZONA'S GROUNDWATER

Farmers and ranchers are some of the best stewards of our water supply. They rely on this precious resource for their lives and livelihoods. I can speak from firsthand experience, as my family has been a part of the agriculture industry for generations. Conservation has been a natural priority to us. We know what the consequences are if we don't conserve. After the Governor's Water Council chose to alienate the voices of Arizona's agriculture industry when crafting groundwater management policy ideas, I'm thrilled to report that soon, I will be introducing a bill this session incorporating the wisdom of our farmers and ranchers from across the state to help regulate groundwater and basin management in a fair and balanced manner. My bill will focus on empowering local authority, using real-time data, protecting economies, and providing certainty when determining best practices for responsibly managing our groundwater supply. Stay tuned!



-Senator Sine Kerr

PROTECTING YOUR 2ND AMMENDMENT RIGHTS

Arizona Legislative Republicans are proud to join 26 other states in protecting your constitutional right to bear arms by challenging California's so-called "Assault Weapon Control Act," which prohibits the "purchase, sale, gift, lending, manufacturing, distribution, or importation" of certain firearms, including many types of semiautomatic rifles that are commonly used by law-abiding citizens for self-defense. A federal judge has already declared this law unconstitutional, yet California Democrats continue to challenge that ruling, and the law remains in effect. This law not only impacts Arizonans who travel to California, it places a disruptive burden on the companies who manufacture these weapons. The Second Amendment does not allow California to force its liberal policies on the rest of the country and outlaw hundreds of semiautomatic rifles and handguns, again, commonly used by law-abiding citizens, and neither will I.



-Senator Sonny Borrelli



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SAFEGUARDING OUR ELECTIONS

The final draft of Elections Procedures Manual was recently released, and I'm very troubled with how it turned out. This is a tool to inform county recorders of how to administer our elections. This past summer, we warned Secretary Fontes that if he did not make corrections to reflect the laws passed by the Legislature, then we would file a lawsuit. He complied with some of our edits before submitting the manual to the Governor and Attorney General for approval, however, the final draft released was heavily modified in a negative way. One of the most egregious errors is the unlawful delay in the implementation of a 2021 state law that helps prevent voter fraud by making sure the active early voter list is up to date. The manual also now includes an additional 17 pages of new content that the public never had the opportunity to weigh in on during the shortened public comment period. President Petersen and Speaker Toma will take legal action by the end of the month.

-Senator Wendy Rogers



AN ATTACK ON DEMOCRACY

I joined an amicus brief this week urging the U.S. Supreme Court to overturn a bad ruling from Colorado, barring former President Trump from the GOP primary ballot this year, under the 14th Amendment. Congress passed Section 3 of the 14th Amendment to disqualify Confederates who had "engaged in insurrection" from holding elected office. Not only has former President Trump never been convicted of engaging in insurrection, but the Constitution also reserves the power to determine the political question of what constitutes an "insurrection" to Congress—not rogue courts. If the high court does not immediately act, we anticipate election chaos will ensue over Trump's eligibility as a candidate. This is clearly a case of judicial activism and a violation of the separation of powers. Leftist bias and prejudice are on full display from the Colorado Supreme Court. I'm confident the U.S. Supreme Court will strike down this dangerous attack on our democracy.

-President Warren Petersen





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BORDER CHAOS CONTINUES, LUKEVILLE REOPENS

The Lukeville Port of Entry re-opened Thursday after a month-long closure that had devastating economic effects. I think it goes without saying that closing a port of entry that law-abiding citizens use and depend on daily was harmful and reckless. People lost their jobs, families were separated, and businesses were put in financial jeopardy. The Biden Administration has yet to address the crisis at the border in any productive manner, and instead has placed the burden on local communities. Although I will continue to demand that President Biden do his job, I remain steadfast in working to create legislation to help our state and local law enforcement. Let's be thankful we have law enforcement in Arizona like my local Sheriff, Mark Dannels, and his deputies, from Cochise County, who are doing the job of protecting our citizens and defending our borders in the best way possible where the Biden Administration has failed.



-Senator David Gowan

A FOCUS ON CHILD SAFETY

This week, we held the Sunset Review of the Arizona Department of Child Safety. The legislature is required to periodically review state agencies based on the results of the agency's performance audit by the Arizona Auditor General. As chairman of the Health and Human Services Committee, I felt it was necessary to make a motion to continue DCS for four years, instead of the typical 8-10. The performance audit revealed alarming shortfalls and lack of accountability that must be addressed. I would never suggest the termination of DCS, as this is an important agency tasked with protecting some of the most vulnerable. I do believe this shortened continuation period provides adequate time to address and correct the many issues the department faces. Additionally, I will be introducing legislation to specifically help with the agency's inability to investigate group home employees when there is alleged child abuse.



-Senator T.J. Shope



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SHINING A LIGHT ON MENTAL HEALTH

During a 5-hour long committee on Wednesday, we heard powerful testimony on how our state's healthcare system is failing our citizens who are severely mentally ill, and their families. I co-chaired the Joint Legislative Psychiatric Hospital Review Council, which brought to light many issues ranging from lack of resources, to dangerous protocols, and most of all, lack of oversight and accountability. There are major gaps in the system that are allowing SMI patients to deteriorate and cause harm to themselves and others. Patients are simply not receiving the care they need for the amount of time necessary for them to improve. After hearing testimony from moms who lost their children who were in and out of the system, I believe a long-term, secured behavioral health facility could have prevented many of these terrible outcomes and would save many lives in the future. We would also have less people incarcerated. It's clear, we need more long-term options for these patients.



-Senator Justine Wadsack



PROTECTING FREE SPEECH ON CAMPUS

The Joint Legislative Ad Hoc Committee on Freedom of Expression at Arizona's Public Universities convened this week to vote on a list of recommendations that will help in my efforts to craft legislation this session to protect First Amendment rights on campus. Ensuring free speech at our state universities is paramount to a free society. Over the past several months, disturbing testimony revealed a faculty-led condemnation campaign against a conservative event at ASU and a lack of action on the matter from administrators. I'll work on ensuring free expression policies apply to not only students, but faculty, administrators, and staff. I'll also address enforcement of these policies on campus, as well as assurance to students that their choice to engage in any form of protected free speech will not negatively impact their grades. Additionally, I'll address the responsibility of ABOR to ensure public universities are executing and enforcing their duties to protect free speech.



-Senator Anthony Kern





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