

## State Budget Bad for All -- except the wealthiest



June 25, 2021

Hi everyone!

This week the majority in the Arizona Legislature jammed through a mean budget that will benefit the wealthiest and hurt our state immensely during tough times. It was modified slightly from the original single 2.5% flat tax rate to include two rates--2.55% for those who have incomes of \$27,272 or less per year and 2.98% for everyone else. It is a huge tax cut for those with the deepest pockets and chump change for those with low incomes.

The budget bills were also loaded up with bad policies, including numerous provisions to mess with elections, some to respond to the "Big Lie," such as requiring special paper and holograms on the ballots and a special legislative committee to review the findings of the partisan ballot counting (not an audit). This

budget takes away the power from the current Secretary of State to settle election-related lawsuits and gives it to the Attorney General, but just until the end of her term -- this is a blatantly partisan, move. It also takes authority from the Clean Elections Commission and shifts that to the Attorney General. There is a provision to appropriate \$500K and establish a joint committee to investigate social media for bias against Republicans. There is more.

The budget establishes a fund for "border security," including construction of physical barriers.

They kept spending of \$200 million for projects to import water from out of state (see Mississippi River), and to fund more groundwater pumping outside the active management areas (AMAs) stayed in the budget and was just amended to limit double dipping from Drought Mitigation and Water Supply Development.

Legislators reduced the appropriation for the Arizona State Parks Heritage Fund from the \$10 million per year the voters originally had intended to \$5 million. This is a one time appropriation. The \$250,000 for the Arizona Trail is still included as is the \$15 million for the Water Quality Assurance Revolving Fund for cleaning up contaminated sites.

In other actions, the House passed [SCR1034 \(voter protection act; court determinations\)](#). It refers to the ballot a measure to allow the Legislature to amend, supersede or appropriate or divert funds created by an initiative or referendum measure approved by the voters if the measure is found to contain any illegal or unconstitutional language by the Arizona or US Supreme Court. This would allow the legislature to throw out an entire measure, even if a small part was successfully challenged and would blow a big hole in the Voter Protection Act. **Just vote No!**

[HB2309 \(violent; disorderly assembly; public order\)](#) is one of the bad anti-democracy measures still out there. This bill will chill actions by protesters and have a disproportionate impact on people of color who are already targeted by law enforcement and will infringe on our First Amendment rights. **Please continue to let legislators know you oppose this.**

Here is an update on the other anti-democracy measures.

- [HB2792 \(early ballots; request required\)](#) prohibits elections officials from providing an early ballot to someone who did not request it and makes it a class 6 felony to do so. This is ridiculous on so many levels, including that we do not currently allow mailing of ballots to people unless they have requested it. **This was vetoed by the Governor, but was brought back as SB1837 and has passed out of the Senate 16-14.**
- [SB1106 \(S/E registration; permanent early voting list\)](#) removes the requirement that a county recorder try to contact a voter at the voter's new residence address if an election notice is returned undeliverable. It makes it a felony to try and assist any other person that resides in another state in voting, including forwarding an early ballot addressed to the other person. **This bill awaits action in House Committee of the Whole.**
- [SB1241 \(voting equipment; ballots; receipt\)](#) requires counties to send ballots that have mismatched signatures -- where the signature on the envelope does not match the signature on file -- to the Attorney General for potential investigation. There are all kinds of legitimate reasons signatures can vary including age, health, and disabilities. It is unconscionable to make people feel like criminals when a signature is easy enough to verify. The bill also requires counties to provide receipts to voters upon request, either printed by the tabulation machine or written out by a poll worker. There are real logistical issues with this. **This passed out of the House 31-29 and awaits final passage in the Senate.**
- [SB1531 \(petition signatures; description; invalidity\)](#) voids the signature of any initiative or referendum petition signer that signs the petition without either hearing or reading the description printed on the petition. We do not require people to read anything about candidates before signing their petitions or voting on anything, why to sign an initiative petition? It also says

the circulator has to cross out a signature if they think the person did not read or listen to the description. The result will be more signatures disqualified. **It awaits action in the House Committee of the Whole.**

- [HCR2001 \(initiatives; single subject; title\)](#) refers to the ballot a measure that narrows what can be included in a ballot measure and requires every subject to be in the title. This would make it impossible to place something on the ballot that is comprehensive and would provide another reason to toss out a ballot measure on a technicality. **This awaits action in the Senate Rules Committee.**
- [HCR2016 \(initiatives; supermajority vote requirement\)](#) refers to the ballot a measure to require a 55% approval rather than a simple majority approval for all ballot measures. This is a difficult threshold and will limit opportunities to address important environmental, animal, and social justice issues. **It is on the Senate Rules Committee Agenda for Monday.**
- [SCR1024 \(initiatives; tax increases; vote requirement\)](#) refers to the ballot a requirement that initiatives and referenda that include taxes have a two-thirds vote from voters. This is an extremely high bar for these ballot measures. **It awaits action in the House Committee of the Whole.**

### Updates on other bills:

[HB2248 \(corporation commission; electric generation resources\)](#) is staying on our watch list until the session ends. This bill infringes on the powers of the Arizona Corporation Commission (ACC) and seeks to derail the clean energy rules that are now back on track at the ACC. **This bill was held in the Senate Rules Committee in early April.**

[HB2671 \(now: underground storage tanks; standards; reimbursements\)](#) includes provisions for underground storage tanks to meet federal requirements, which I am pretty sure they should anyway, and it eliminates the sunset of this tax. This program has become a big subsidy for entities such as Circle K that should be using their private insurance to pay for leaky tanks. These dollars should be to help fund actions by the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality, but not pay the bill for these massive corporations. **This passed out of the Senate 17-12-1 and is on the House Final Read Calendar for Monday.**

Use the button below to ask your Senator to vote NO on HCR2016.

Take Action on HCR2016!

Please sign in on the [Request to Speak System](#) to oppose HCR2016 in the Senate Rules Committee on Monday.

[You can see bills we are tracking here.](#)

If you don't know who your legislators are, just use this [Find My Legislator link](#) and enter your address to find your district, then go to [Members](#) to see who represents your district. You will find their phone numbers and email addresses there as well.

If you are not receiving these updates directly, you can sign up for them [here](#).

Thank you for taking action!



Sandy Bahr  
Chapter Director  
Sierra Club - Grand Canyon Chapter



## Coming Up This Week at the Arizona Legislature

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On Monday, they will hear HCR2016 in the Senate Rules Committee HB2671 on the House Floor. It is unclear if they will wrap up on Monday or later in the week.



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Chiricahua Leopard Frog Tadpole photo by Jim Rorabough

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