

ARIZONA LEGISLATIVE ALERT

January 24, 2021

CLIMATE CHANGE

SB 1175 and HB 2248 – OPPOSE – USE RTS - Would strip the Corporation Commission (ACC) of the ability to enact policies that would promote renewable energy efforts in Arizona over the next several years. These bills are “mirror” bills moving in both houses to reduce public comment.

ENVIRONMENTAL

SB1222 and SB 1223 – OPPOSE These bills sponsored by Kerr, pertain to management and control of invasive (non-native) vegetation species. While they sound appealing, the Sierra Club has advised caution because often aggressive weed management is carried out without any requirement for considering negative environmental impacts (eg of herbicides or physical disturbance) or for re-establishment of native vegetation or ecosystem function.

SB1274 – OPPOSE - This bill deals with assurances of sufficient groundwater for residential development in specific southern Arizona groundwater management areas (in effect, if a subdivision or development had been previously approved, the developers could change the number of housing units to be built without having to re-analyze the sufficiency of the water supply). Groundwater protection is a major issue this session for both Sierra Club and Audubon.

HB 2520 – SUPPORT – Prohibiting hydraulic fracking in Arizona.

VOTING RIGHTS

SB 1010 – OPPOSE – Would order a recount of any election if requested by anyone who was willing to post a bond to pay for the recount. The recount could be asked for for any reason.

SB 1069 – OPPOSE – Would permanently drop voters from the PEVL if they failed to vote in two back to back elections.

HB 2039 – OPPOSE – USE RTS - Would double the percentage of ballots that would have to be counted by hand. This would increase the cost and complexity of recounts that are totally unnecessary. The reasons given to oppose by CEBV needs additional support.

HB 2054 – OPPOSE – Would require the SOS to purge deceased voters and there is a great potential for voters to be removed by mistake and the requirement is unnecessary. The reasons given to oppose by CEBV needs additional support.

CLEAN ELECTIONS

HB 2014 – OPPOSE – USE RTS - Would allow anyone to ask the Governor’s Regulatory Review Council (GRRRC) to review a Clean Elections practice, action or rule, based upon nothing more than the person’s belief that it exceeds the agency’s authority or violates the Arizona Constitution. The crux of this bill is to prevent the disclosure of dark money that Clean Elections is requiring of some groups.

EDUCATION

SB 1097 – SUPPORT – USE RTS - Would let students have excused absences for mental health reasons.

SB 1041 – OPPOSE – USE RTS - Would quadruple over 3 years the amount Arizona spends on a specific type of corporate School Tuition Organization (STO) tax credit and then tie it's growth to inflation afterwards. This is a tax break for corporations to give money to private schools. This overturns a bi-partisan agreement to cap these credits last year. This takes money from public education to fund private schools.

HB 2015 – SUPPORT – Would appropriate money to replace missing federal preschool funding. This funding is a critical need to preschools and to return us to previous funding levels.

HCR 2005 – SUPPORT – USE RTS - Would repeal that students be taught in English only. By repealing this it would help some 80,000 students what have shown a poor graduation percentage.

HB 2137 – SUPPORT – Would extend time and allocates money for the Department of Education to plan for dyslexia screening and train teachers.

HB 2315 – SUPPORT – USE RTS - Would make School Board candidates eligible for online signature collection. We need good people to help pilot our schools and in these challenging times we should do all we can to help candidates qualify for ballots.

SB 1058 – OPPOSE – USE RTS - Would require districts to post all “learning materials” and “activities” that were used for student instruction during the prior year, and any procedures that were used to review or approve the learning materials and activities on their website. SB1058 will limit the ability of teachers to use their professional judgment in order to do their jobs in the classroom. This bill seeks to micromanage teachers and limit local control by adding further bureaucracy on school districts.

Arizona is facing a crushing teacher shortage and this bill would drive more teachers out of the classroom. SB1058 is on the Senate Education Committee agenda for Tuesday, January 26. [Contact committee members and ask them to treat teachers with the respect they deserve as professionals oppose SB1058](#)

SB 1227 – SUPPORT – USE RTS - AEA member, past Arizona teacher of the year, and newly elected Senator Christine Marsh, has introduced legislation that would create a study committee on class sizes. SB1227 would direct this committee to determine appropriate class sizes, identify methods of reducing class sizes, determine the costs of the methods of reducing class sizes, and identify how existing school facilities and available classroom space are conducive to reducing class sizes. Arizona has some of the highest class sizes in the country and this bill is a good start towards addressing our state's classroom size challenges.

SB1227 is being heard in Senate Education Committee on Tuesday, January 26. [Tell committee members to vote YES on SB1227.](#)

HB 2174 – OPPOSE – USE RTS - Project Rocket is a 3-year pilot program introduced by Governor Ducey tying test scores to increased funding for eligible school districts in low-income areas. Our students are more than a bubble test and if our leaders are serious about quality public education, then they need to offer real solutions, starting with restoring full funding to our schools. This legislation, House Bill (HB) 2174, requires districts to jump through too many hoops for a temporary band aid solution. Given the impact of the pandemic on our schools, the legislature should be looking at permanent funding solutions rather than test-based grant programs that could leave schools without funding later down the road.

HB2174 is being heard in the House Education Committee on Tuesday, January 26. [Tell committee members to support full funding for schools and oppose HB2174.](#)

HB2403 and SB1165 – SUPPORT – These bills are identical bills that will allow school boards to waive the teacher performance evaluations for the 2020-21 school year. It also removes the requirement of a teacher evaluation in the 2020-21 school year in order for a teacher to be eligible to receive performance pay from the Classroom Site Fund. AEA supports holding teachers harmless given the impact of the pandemic. These two bills are both being heard in their respective education committees on Tuesday. [Tell legislators to support HB2403 and SB1165.](#)

HB2402 and SB1178 – SUPPORT – These bills are identical bills that will put a pause on the A-F letter grade classifications for schools for two years. AEA supports holding schools harmless given the impact of the pandemic on schools. These two bills are both being heard in their respective education committees on Tuesday. [Tell legislators to support HB2402 and SB1178.](#)

HB 2138 – OPPOSE – USE RTS - Representative John Kavanagh has introduced a bill that will weaken the Arizona State Retirement System (ASRS), the pension plan for all public state employees, including school employees. HB2138 would allow universities to offer their own optional retirement program to all employees. Right now, we have one of the best state retirement systems in the country. If passed, this bill would increase ASRS' unfunded liability. Without new university employees entering ASRS, the system would increase its debt and contribution rates could go up for educators and all other public employees. A traditional pension plan like ASRS provides retired workers with a steady income stream that is guaranteed for life — unlike 401k plans, which offer no guaranteed benefits and are leaving far too many Americans facing a retirement crisis. HB2138 is on the House Government and Elections Committee agenda for Wednesday, January 27. [Tell legislators to vote NO on HB2138.](#)

SB 1189 – SUPPORT – USE RTS - Would allow school districts to request extra funding from the Department of Education's Extraordinary Special Education Needs Fund for students whose education costs more than 3 times the average. This is a critical first step for funding for students with special needs, the vast majority of whom choose public schools.

GENERAL FUND

SB 1135 – WATCH– USE RTS - Would increase the allowable dollar-for-dollar 529 tax deduction, currently a total allowed of \$2,000 for a single parent or \$4,000 for a couple, would increase it to that amount per 529 beneficiary. The change would significantly increase the amount of tax deduction possible. There is no indication of the total impact on the General Fund in a typical year. More information is needed to have a valid opinion on this.

GOVERNANCE

HCR 2001 – OPPOSE – USE RTS - Would eliminate any type of comprehensive problem solving via initiatives and place unreasonable restrictions on initiatives by requiring initiatives to be limited to a single topic.

HCR 2002 – OPPOSE – USE RTS - Would support a constitutional amendment to limit the US Supreme Court to nine justices. This issue is appropriately dealt with by the US Congress and does not require a constitutional amendment.

SCR 1001 – OPPOSE – USE RTS - Would ask voters to repeal Governor Ducey's executive order privileges. Clearly an attempt to limit the Governor's ability to cope with situations like the COVID 19 pandemic.

SCR 1003 – OPPOSE – USE RTS - Asks voters to allow the governor to declare a state of emergency for only 14 days. After that, both chambers of the legislature would need to reauthorize it or go into special session. Another attempt to limit the office of the Governor to deal with emergencies.

SCR 1010 – OPPOSE – USE RTS - Asks voters to amend the constitution to require the legislature to go into special session for the duration of any declaration of emergency. Would cost the government a significant amount to put the legislators on daily allowance for extended periods for no real benefit.

SCR 1014 – OPPOSE – USE RTS - Asks voters to limit the governor’s state of emergency powers to 21 days and require legislative reauthorization every 21 days. The bill would prohibit a new state of emergency being declared based on conditions for which the legislature has previously denied. Clearly an attempt to usurp the office of Governor powers by the Legislature.

HEALTHCARE

HB 2291 – SUPPORT – USE RTS - Would require Arizona’s Medicaid program to provide comprehensive dental care for pregnant women ages 21+. This is the fifth year this proposal has been introduced. It’s time to get it adopted.

HB 2650 – OPPOSE - Rep. Walt Blackman, R-Snowflake, has introduced legislation requiring prosecutors to charge women who opt to end their pregnancies — and the doctors who help them do it — with homicide.

Blackman shrugged off legal protections enshrined in federal law, arguing that Roe v. Wade is only an "opinion" and the U.S. Supreme Court should "honor (Arizona's) sovereignty."

The bill says county attorneys must pursue criminal prosecutions "regardless of any contrary or conflicting federal laws, regulations, treaties, court decisions or executive orders."

The legislation, which expands the definition of a "person" to include "an unborn child in the womb at any stage of development," would allow both the state attorney general and county attorneys to prosecute "homicide by abortion." It removes existing protections for "an unborn child's mother" as well as "the person ... performing an abortion" with the mother's consent.

Nine other representatives have signed on in support of the bill: Brenda Barton, R-Payson; Leo Biasiucci, R-Lake Havasu City; Shawna Bolick, R-Phoenix; Judy Burges, R-Skull Valley; Frank Carroll, R-Sun City West; David Cook, R-Globe; John Fillmore, R-Apache Junction; Jake Hoffman, R-Queen Creek; and Ben Toma, R-Peoria.

NATIVE AMERICAN SUPPORT

HB 2215 – SUPPORT – USE RTS - Would appropriate \$35 Million to the Hopi Tribe for Route H60, a 13-mile stretch of dirt road that connects the Navajo community of Low Mountain with the Hope community of Polacca. The road, which frequently washes out, would connect 7 school districts. This infrastructure improvement is really a matter of student success.

LEGISLATIVE ALERT

FEDERAL / COCONINO COUNTY / FLAGSTAFF CITY

JANUARY 24, 2021

Coconino County Democratic Party with Democrats of the Red Rocks

FEDERAL

CONTACT SEN. KYRSTEN SINEMA: Sen. Sinema has just stated she is against ending the filibuster. (Politico Jan. 21, 2021) Contact the Senator to say: "It's a mistake to take filibuster off the table. Please issue a public statement that you will reconsider your position if Republicans obstruct the war time level funding needed to combat Covid 19 and rescue our economy."

Contact Sen Sinema via email through her website at sinema.senate.gov or call to (202) 224-4521.

PLEASE CONTACT REP O'HALLARAN FOR THESE NEXT ITEMS:

IN FAVOR: H.Res.25 - Directing the Committee on Ethics to investigate, and issue a report on, whether any and all actions taken by Members of the 117th Congress who sought to overturn the 2020 Presidential election violated their oath of office to uphold the Constitution or the Rules of the House of Representatives, and should face sanction, including removal from the House of Representatives. 54 Co Sponsors including Reps. Grijalva and Kirkpatrick

IN FAVOR: H.R. 1 "For the People Act" sponsored by Rep. John Sarbanes (D Maryland). This bill would expand Americans' access to the ballot box, reduce the influence of big money in politics, strengthen ethics rules for public servants, and implement other anti-corruption measures for the purpose of fortifying our democracy, and for other purposes.

Contact Rep. O'Halleran by sending him an email through his website at ohalleran.house.gov or call to (202) 225-3361.

COCONINO COUNTY

Goal is to have 120,000 residents vaccinated using some 15 facilities, grocery stores, drug stores, etc. as soon as vaccine becomes available. The problem has been the supply of the vaccine. The County seems to be well organized but needs vaccine supply to fully implement.

Call 928-679-7300 for information and help. Also call 928-679-7452.

Go to the Coconino County Facebook page tomorrow at 3:00 PM for the COVID 19 vaccine update.

INDEPENDENT REDISTRICTING COMMISSION (IRC)

The Commission is in the process of deciding how to include public participation. This includes deciding how/when/if to take public comments, if contact information for individual Commissioners will be made public, and how many public meetings to hold.

Look for a link or other method to reach the IRC when it is available prior to their next scheduled meeting on February 2. This will be available via e-mail or on the CC Dems website and/or Facebook page.

Suggested public comments:

- Request to Commission to clarify how the public will be able to communicate with the Commission.
- Encourage open communication and transparency.
- Encourage Commission to have more than one way to submit Public Comments. Rather than it being limited to a specific day and limited time, as it was done in the first two Commission meetings, there should also be a website form, as there was in 2011, to submit comments at any time.
- Encourage Commission to make Public Comments available to the public.
- Encourage Commission to promote public engagement by several avenues, including public meetings and public comments.