



## Arizona Projects Budget Surplus

### JLBC Presents October Update

At a Finance Advisory Committee Meeting, Joint Legislative Budget Council (JLBC) analysts announced that Arizona is anticipated to experience a \$421 million surplus for FY2021. Since the JLBC June update, revenue collections were higher than expected and the preliminary FY2020 ending balance (June 30th, 2020) shows a \$372 million loss.

In April, JLBC analysts projected that the state would face a \$1.1 billion deficit at the end of FY2021 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, but could vary by as much as \$500 million based on the unreliability projections of state revenues and expenses. In the October update, JLBC emphasized that the newest projection of a \$421 million surplus for FY2021 is also subject to change. The October estimate assumes no long-term spikes in COVID-19 and no wide-scale business shutdowns. In addition, a new federal aid package which is being negotiated in Congress could significantly change the October projections. JLBC estimates that extending the current enhanced Federal Medicaid match could save \$500 million in FY2022.

JLBC also highlighted that over 100,000 Arizonans remain unemployed as a result of the pandemic. The hardest hit sectors in the report, based on TPT (state sales tax collections) are restaurants and bars, and lodging industries, which declined by 20% and 33%, respectively. Retail and remote sales increased by 14% and contracting increased by 1%.

To review the JLBC Staff Presentation, click [here](#).

To review the JLBC October Budget Update, click [here](#).

To review the Finance Advisory Committee Meeting, click [here](#).

## Arizona ranked in new report; new data on personal income

In a new report published by *State Policy Reports* (SPR), Arizona is ranked third best in the nation for economic momentum, and in the top four for employment and population growth.

The Index of State Economic Momentum developed by SPR ranks states based on their most recent performance on three key measures of economic vitality: personal income growth, employment growth, and population growth. The results were based on the impact of a recent significant influx of federal payments to individuals in response to COVID-19. As a result, the index only reflects economic momentum caused by the federal payments which boosted personal income.

To read the SPR report, click [here](#).

Unrelated to SPR's information, the U.S. Census Bureau compared average median household income growth for the current year with the period between 2014-2016, and 2017-2019. The Census Bureau figure showed an increase in Arizona median household income growth of 15.2%. Arizona experienced the fifth strongest personal income growth in 2019, according to data from the Bureau of Economic Analysis.

## AZDHS issues COVID-19 update

Arizona Department of Health Services (AZDHS) officials corrected some errors in the COVID-19 dashboard. Director Christ in a [blog post](#) (link here), wrote that "a large healthcare provider" was reporting dates for patients being admitted to the hospital "when these individuals were not actually hospitalized." She continued "the data being reported in the admission date field of the report form was actually the date the individual was seen by a healthcare provider." As a result, these cases were incorrectly being reported as an admission date and counted as a patient being hospitalized. AZDHS is continuing to address technical reporting issues which have led to inaccurate bed counts and other discrepancies.

AZDHS figures show that 85% of inpatient beds and 80% of ICU beds were in use, which includes people being treated for COVID-19 and other patients. COVID-19 patients were using 8% of all inpatient beds and 9% of ICU beds. Overall, 24% of ventilators were in use. The state's COVID-19 rate of spread (Rt) is above 1 at 1.06 (the average number of people a COVID-positive individual will infect). Of known test results from last week, AZDHS reported that 4% have come back positive. A positivity rate of 5% or less is considered a good indicator that the spread is being controlled.

For more information on free COVID-19 testing sites click [here](#).

## Voter Registration Deadline Extended

A United States District Court Judge ruled that Arizona must extend the voter registration deadline from October 5th to October 23rd.

Non-profit organizations *Mi Familia Vota* and *Arizona Coalition for Change* sued Arizona Secretary of State (AZSOS) Katie Hobbs alleging that COVID-19 has made it difficult to register new additional voters this election cycle. The groups alleged that they were on track to meet or exceed their goals of registering 30,000 and 25,000 new voters, respectively, before Governor Ducey enacted a stay-at-home order on March 30th. They argued that after the order was implemented, registration numbers began to steadily decrease which disrupted their efforts. According to the suit, it stated that 146,214 people registered to vote in Arizona between January and August of 2016, the last presidential election year. By contrast, the comparable figure for this year is 62,565. Those groups also stated that 37 other states allow voters to sign up much closer than 29 days before the election and 40% of these states permit them to register and vote on the same day.

Judge Steven Logan ruled that COVID-19 and travel restrictions put in place by Governor Ducey have made it difficult for the plaintiffs and others to register more new voters. Judge Logan in his decision wrote "a core tenet of democracy is to be ruled by a government that represents the population." He continued "due to COVID-19, a portion of the population is prevented from registering to vote, and thus the integrity of the election is undermined in a different way; that portion is going unrepresented. Extending the deadline would give more time for those voters to register and let their voices be heard through the democratic process."

In response to the decision, the Republican National Committee and Republican National Senatorial Committee filed an appeal to the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals arguing that the longstanding voter deadline is meant to align with other important aspects of the process. In their suit, the groups wrote "in inflicting this eleventh-hour change on Arizona's electoral infrastructure, the district court's order contravenes repeated, and recently reiterated, admonitions by this court and the U.S. Supreme Court against judicial tinkering with states' election machinery on the eve of voting."

Hobbs has stated that AZSOS will not pursue the case further and it remains unclear when the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals will hear arguments.

To read the decision by Judge Logan, click [here](#).

### **Judge rules in favor of new remote voting procedures**

A Maricopa County Superior Court Judge ruled that people confined in a healthcare facility and who must vote remotely are legally entitled to use video screens to cast their ballot despite a state law which makes it illegal.

For the August Primary, Maricopa County Recorder Adrian Fontes argued

that his proposed changes which allowed some voters who were confined in a facility due to illness or disability to cast a ballot via video conferencing was necessary and lawful. State [law](#) (click here for the statute reference) allows for “special election boards” comprised of one Republican and one Democrat to meet the voter in person, fill out the ballot as directed, and return it for counting. Both Fontes and Arizona Secretary of State (AZSOS) Katie Hobbs suggested that a videoconference would satisfy those parameters. Hobbs issued similar guidance to all fifteen counties by advising county recorders that they could aid voters who are in the hospital or an assisted care facility to cast their ballots using video conferencing if no family member or caregiver is able to assist them. Hobbs said that whether the other counties are entitled to follow suit in issuing similar practices was dependent on what the court concluded.

In his decision, Maricopa Superior Court Judge Randall Warner ruled in favor of Fontes and Hobbs by concluding that the statute is unambiguous. Warner stated that the county recorder has a duty to ensure a voter’s disability does not prevent them from voting, which includes a requirement to make “reasonable modifications”. He wrote “if a person’s disability is such that they cannot meet with a special election board in person, then the ‘in person’ requirement must yield to federal law.” He continued “federal law does not allow Arizona to impose on disabled voters the choice between voting and protecting their health.” Despite his decision, Warner stated that his ruling was not a broad license for expanded use of video screens to cast ballots. He stated that the law still requires personal contact, a requirement that “only yields to federal law when necessary to allow a disabled person to vote.”

To read the decision by Judge Warner, click [here](#).



**Governor Ducey presentation in honor of Kayla Mueller**





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House races

Click here to find the AGA  
analysis of the 2020  
Senate races

## Legislators' Birthdays



Happy Birthday  
Speaker Rusty Bowers (R)  
Tuesday, Oct. 20th

Representing LD25, Representative Bowers is the current Speaker of the House. A Mesa native, Bowers was first elected to the House in 1993 and served two terms as a state Senator until 2001. He returned to the Legislature in 2015. Bowers is a renowned artist in many mediums including, pencil, watercolors, and oils; he is also a remarkable sculptor of wood, clay, bronze and other materials. Many of his drawing, paintings, and sculptures are on display throughout the United States. To add on to his already impressive resume, Bowers is an accomplished instrumentalist and singer. To wish Speaker Bowers happy birthday: [rbowers@azleg.gov](mailto:rbowers@azleg.gov)



Happy Birthday  
Rep. Regina Cobb (R)  
Friday, October 30th

Representing LD6, Representative Cobb is Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee. Born in San Diego, Cobb moved to Kingman in 1993 after she received her D.D.S. from Case Western Reserve University. A practicing dentist, Cobb was first elected to the House in 2015 and is running unopposed in the upcoming general election. In addition to her Chairmanship, Cobb is a member of the House Education and Ways and Means committees. This session, her top legislative priority was HB2668 which was signed into law by the Governor. This legislation brings more resources into Arizona's healthcare system by increasing Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS) provider rates for hospitals, doctors and more. To wish Representative Cobb happy birthday: [rcobb@azleg.gov](mailto:rcobb@azleg.gov)

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