



# ARIZONA AFL-CIO 56th LEGISLATIVE SESSION SUMMARY

## »» The 56th Session Unveiled

The 56th Legislative Session in Arizona was historic in both length and impact, stretching over two sessions; Session 1, lasting 201 days. Setting a record as the longest legislative session in Arizona's history, followed by Session 2, which extended for another 160 days - five months. This extended period of legislative activity brought forth a multitude of bills, both beneficial and detrimental to Arizona's workers.

Despite all the mayhem this session brought, we fought for working people and so did our Governor! Katie Hobbs played a pivotal role with her extensive use of veto power, rejecting over 100 harmful bills. Her actions were critical in demonstrating the checks and balances within Arizona's government.

# Financial Blueprint: AZ Budget

In 2023, Arizona had a budget surplus, but the ESA voucher scam quickly consumed much of the budget for both fiscal years. That year, Republican lawmakers decided to spend the entire \$2.5 billion surplus without considering changes to income from recent legislation. They expected a \$10 million surplus but ended up with a \$1.8 billion deficit going into 2024 negotiations. This miscalculation resulted from the flat tax rate implemented in 2021 by then-Governor Doug Ducey, which reduced state revenue.

With a \$1.8 billion deficit for the 2024 budget, budget cuts became a priority. All Arizona state departments, except the Department of Child Services and the Department of Corrections, faced cuts of at least 3.5%. Universities were significantly affected, with Arizona State University losing nearly \$11 million, and the University of Arizona and Northern Arizona University losing over \$10 million combined. Funding for K-12 education also changed, as it was a one-time approval, meaning the legislature will have to renegotiate funding next year.

# WINS FOR WORKERS

## Positive Legislative Change



Despite the challenges, several legislative victories reinforced the rights and welfare of Arizona's working people. These bills were passed to improve labor conditions, enhance worker protections, and support economic opportunities for families across the state. These wins are crucial in understanding the progress made during the session.

### »» Workplace Safety

Transportation, airport, and railroad employees have been victims of severe assault while performing their duties. HB2747 ensures that if an attacker assaults these workers, it becomes a class 6 felony. This provides greater protection and deterrence for these vital employees.

### »» Worker Benefits & Healthcare Access

- HB2717 recognizes 911 Dispatchers as public safety employees and guarantees that 911 Dispatchers who have experienced traumatic situations while on duty receive the proper counseling.
- Tier 3 Members of the Corrections Officer Retirement Plan (CORP) and Public Safety Personnel Retirement System (PSPRS) receive greater flexibility to have retirement plans upon re-employment through HB2015.



# WINS FOR WORKERS

## Positive Legislative Change



### »» Reproductive Healthcare Access

HB2677 repeals the 1864 territorial-era abortion ban and removed the associated criminal penalties, marking a significant win for reproductive autonomy. By overturning this Civil War-era law, the Arizona Senate has ensured women's greater control over their bodies, a fundamental right. This legislation not only empowers women but also improves the overall health and well-being of Arizona's workforce. By supporting reproductive rights, this bill enhances equality in the workplace and strengthens the labor force.

### »» Continuation of State Agencies

These bills continued state agencies that are vital to labor and workers' rights.

- HB2209 extends the life of the Industrial Commission of Arizona (ICA) until July 2032, which is an important part of the labor department that deals with workers' compensation, wages, workplace safety, and child labor violations. Without this, the ICA would have ended.
- HB2091 continues the Registrar of Contractors (ROC) for four years, extending another important state government entity.
- HB2210 continued the Occupational Safety and Health Advisory Committee (OSHA), helping to protect workers' right to a safe workplace.



# Red Flags: Problematic Laws from the Session



## »» Undermining Workers' Compensation

SB1164 requires the Industrial Commission of Arizona to establish a fraud unit to investigate supposed fraudulent workers' compensation claims. This bill creates a hostile environment for injured workers by prioritizing fraud investigations over providing necessary support. It can lead to unnecessary scrutiny and delays for these genuinely seeking compensation, potentially discouraging workers from filing legitimate claims out of fear of being investigated. This undermines the workers' compensation system, which is meant to protect and support workers who suffer injuries on the job.

## »» Limiting Picketing Rights

SB1023 threatens the fundamental right to protest and picket, a crucial tool for workers to voice their grievances and advocate for better working conditions. This bill expands the "offense" of residential picketing to include situations where someone may find a person picketing at their residence to be doing so in a threatening or harassing manner or in a way that is directed at residents. By expanding the definition of offensive picketing it creates broad and subjective criteria that can be used to suppress peaceful demonstrations. This weakens the collective bargaining power of workers and diminishes their ability to fight for fair treatment and better workplace conditions



# Red Flags: Problematic Laws from the Session



## »» Threatening Student Organization Funding

HB2178 prompts ASU students to choose which student organizations receive funding from their activity fees. By shifting the allocation of funding from an elected body to individual students, this bill risks undermining the collective decision-making process. It could lead to decreased funding for organizations that advocate for workers' rights and collective bargaining, weakening their influence and support.

## »» Restricting Legislative Vacancy Process

SB1278 changes the process for filling legislative vacancies by having a specific timeline for the County Board of Supervisors and Precinct Committees to nominate and appoint replacements. This process could lead to rushed and potentially less democratic appointments. It limits the flexibility and responsiveness of local governance, potentially leading to less representative and accountable legislative bodies. This can result in decisions that do not reflect the interests and needs of working families, undermining their trust in the legislative process.

# Fallen Fighters: Bills That Didn't Make It



Numerous bills that could have significantly benefited Arizona's workers but were killed, shot down, or missed opportunities

## »» Heat Safety

HB2628 and HB2683 were crucial bills aimed at significantly benefiting Arizona workers by addressing heat safety. Both bills mandated the Industrial Commission of Arizona (ICA) to establish rules for industries affected by heat illness to enhance prevention measures. Heat protections are especially important for Arizona workers due to the state's extreme temperatures, which can lead to serious health risks such as heat exhaustion and heat stroke. Despite their potential to improve working conditions and protect workers from these dangers, these bills were ultimately killed, shot down, or missed in the legislative process.

## »» Apprenticeships

HB2885 was a vital bill designed to support Arizona workers on supervised probation who are participating in apprenticeship programs. This bill aimed to provide greater allowances for travel and work-hour flexibility, enabling individuals to complete their apprenticeships without violating their probation agreements. Such measures are crucial for helping probationers reintegrate into the workforce, gain valuable skills, and contribute to the economy.



# Fallen Fighters: Bills That Didn't Make It



## »» Workplace Safety for Railways

Railway workers face significant risks on the job, and these legislative measures would have provided crucial protections, reducing the likelihood of accidents and injuries.

- **HB2277** was a significant bill that aimed to allocate resources to the Arizona Corporate Commission (ACC) to fund two railway safety inspectors. By supporting the allocation of these resources, the bill sought to enhance the oversight and safety of Arizona's railways, protecting both workers and the public.
- **HB2526** required the ACC to conduct annual safety inspections of all railroads and railroad tracks within the state. Regular inspections are crucial for identifying and addressing potential hazards, ensuring the ongoing safety and reliability of railway operations.
- **HB2531** and **HB2747** aimed to prohibit trains exceeding a certain length from operating on the railroad tracks. This measure was designed to prevent accidents and improve safety by reducing the risks associated with operating excessively long trains.
- **HB2665** and **HB2232** sought to broaden the regulations related to railroad grade crossings to include considerations for "other on-track equipment." By expanding the scope of safety regulations, these bills aimed to address additional hazards and improve overall railway safety.





# Fallen Fighters: Bills That Didn't Make It



## »» Cost of Living & Wages

- **HB2694** would have lifted the state ban on entering into project labor agreements (PLAs). PLAs ensure fair wages, benefits, and working conditions on public works projects. This would have protected workers' rights, promoted higher labor standards, and potentially increased job security. Additionally, PLAs often include provisions for local hiring and apprenticeships, benefiting the broader community and supporting workforce development.
- **HB2127** proposed increasing the minimum wage for 2024 to \$15/hr and the minimum wage for tipped workers to \$12/hr. Raising the minimum wage would have directly improved the financial well-being of low-income workers, reducing poverty and economic inequality. With higher wages, working families would have more disposable income to cover basic needs, reduce debt, and invest in their future. This increase would also stimulate local economies as workers spend more on goods and services.
- **SB1496** aimed to increase base teacher pay to the median salary in the United States. Higher salaries would help attract and retain talented teachers, improving the quality of education for Arizona's children. Enhanced teacher compensation to the national median would have recognized and rewarded the critical role educators play in society.
- **HB2161** was aimed to limit how much landlords can increase rent within a twelve-month period, which would have provided much-needed stability for renters, helping working families manage their housing costs avoid sudden, unaffordable rent hikes, and improve their overall quality of life.



# Fallen Fighters: Bills That Didn't Make It



## »» Updating Expenditure Regulations

Increasing the funding limit for public education would have provided more resources for schools. SCR1004 would have raised the amount that the state can allocate for public education; improving the quality of education for children and reducing the burden on working families. Also, enhance opportunities that lead to better future job prospects. While HB2688 proposed changes and updates to the procedure of determining expenditure limits for political subdivisions, community college districts, and school districts. Ensuring that schools have the financial flexibility to meet their needs. This would have supported better educational infrastructure and services, benefiting students and educators

## »» Voting Rights

If passed, these bills would have strengthened democratic participation and ensured that every worker in Arizona had a fair opportunity to vote. SB1330 would have required employers to allow five hours of the workday for employees to vote on election day, promoting civic engagement. SB1436 aimed to protect early voting and vote-by-mail rolls from being purged due to inactivity, ensuring convenient voting options and higher voter turnout. HB2073 proposed automatic voter registration for anyone applying for a state ID, simplifying the process and empowering more citizens to engage in the electoral process



# Citizen Choices: Upcoming Ballot Measures



Direct democracy is a powerful tool for shaping Arizona's future. By understanding these ballot measures, voters can make informed decisions.

- **SCR1040**; "Tipped Workers Protection Act" is misleading and does not guarantee tipped workers minimum wage, plus \$2 an hour. This will hurt tipped workers because consumers consistently spend 5% of their income on hospitality and will not increase tips beyond that.
- **HCR2060**; an anti-immigration bill that targets immigrants and is widely compared to SB1070, which was found unconstitutional. If passed it allows state and local police to arrest people crossing the Arizona-Mexico border, gives state judges power to order them to return to their country of origin, and enhances penalties for selling fentanyl that results in death
- **SCR1015**; statewide initiative referendum reform amendment. 5 percent of qualified voters from each legislative district must vote for a ballot measure to pass rather than only 5 percent of all qualified voters.
- **SCR1006**; Death benefit; assault; first responders. Establishes a \$250,000 death benefit for families of first responders killed in the line of duty, funded by a \$20 penalty fee from criminal convictions. Expands the definition of "first responder" and the classifications of aggravated assault to include assault against first responders, thus increasing penal



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- **HCR2039; Governor; emergency powers.** Limits the emergency powers of the Governor and requires greater action from the Legislature.
- **HCR2023; property tax refund for non-enforcement.** Gives property owners tax refunds if they believe that the police aren't doing enough to enforce anti-delinquency laws. This is targeted at homeless people.
- **HCR2033; requires partisan primaries for partisan offices**
- **SCR1041; "Arizona Legal Challenges to Constitutionality of Initiatives Amendment"** will make it easier to create legal challenges to petitioned ballot initiatives, making it harder to get popular policies on the ballot.
- **SCR1012; An anti-Hobbs bill,** which would make it more difficult for the state executive to make changes that cost over \$500,000 over five years to policy without legislative approval. .
- **SCR1044; Justices of the Arizona Supreme Court, intermediate appellate court judges, and superior court judges in populous counties** would serve indefinitely under the terms of "good behavior" rather than on fixed terms. Creates a judicial performance evaluation commission for review of the judge's performances.
- **SCR1021; life imprisonment for the sex trafficking of a minor.** This is a solution to a non-issue.

# Looking Forward: Next Steps for Civic Engagement



As we move beyond the 56th Legislative Session, we must stay engaged and informed about our next steps in civic participation and ensure that Arizona's working people are prepared to make their voices heard in the upcoming elections. This includes [clicking here](#) to check your voting status to ensure eligibility, [clicking here](#) to use Request to Speak (RTS) to voice opinions on pending legislation directly to lawmakers, and [clicking here](#) to sign up for future legislative updates and meetings.

## »» Important Voting Dates

Event	Primary Election	General Election
Voter Registration Deadline	N/A	October 7th, 2024
Absentee Ballot Request Deadline	July 19th, 2024	October 25, 2024
Absentee Ballot Return Deadline	July 30th, 2024	November 5, 2024
Early Voting Dates	July 3rd - July 26th, 2024	October 9th - November 1st, 2024
Election Day	July 30th, 2024	November 5th, 2024

