



January 13, 2024

OPENING DAY OF THE LEGISLATURE

Work at the State Capitol is ramping up. We officially kicked off Opening Day of the 56th Legislature, 2nd Regular Session on Monday with a wonderful program in the Senate. We heard from Arizona legend Jerry Colangelo as our keynote speaker, sharing his experience and wisdom to help inspire our members to serve our state with integrity and character. We read a death resolution honoring the late Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, who was also was our Republican Majority Leader at the Arizona Senate in the 1970s. Her son, Scott O'Connor, joined us and shared some touching stories about his mother. The Highland High School Strolling Strings opened up our program with some beautiful music. Horizon High School's Choir performed God Bless America, and the Luke Air Force Base Honor Guard provided the Presentation of Colors. It was an incredibly special day made better because of the remarkable people involved.



-Senator T.J. Shope



STATE OF THE STATE REBUTTAL

The State of the State Address portrayed a Governor who supports securing our border and ending the lawlessness caused by Joe Biden's broken immigration system. Although it was encouraging to hear, the reality is her actions have not matched her rhetoric. Hobbs made some major mistakes last year by killing three important border security bills that would have kept families safe from drugs and crime. She was a staunch critic of the shipping container barrier and advocated for its removal, even with local leaders and law enforcement arguing it made a difference. She also proposed \$40 million in taxpayer dollars going towards paying for the college educations of people who immigrated here illegally. Fortunately, that failed. However, we remain optimistic about having a productive session. Our plan from the Republican Majority for 2024 is one that any Arizonan can get behind, and prioritizes issues such as securing our border, lowering gas prices, and increasing teacher pay.



-President Warren Petersen





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SCHOOL CHOICE IS HERE TO STAY

ESAs have proven to be an invaluable educational resource. These programs have helped hundreds of thousands of Arizona students find the educational environment that best fits their needs and helps them succeed. This educational success has allowed students to find opportunity and achieve prosperity, yet Katie Hobbs and Democrats want to destroy this success and force children into a failing educational model that's currently leaving 62% of our state's children lacking grade-level proficiency. Hobbs has rolled out a plan on ESAs, which merely proposes solutions in search of a problem and manipulates facts to please her union boss allies. I hosted a press conference at the Capitol this week, and ensured the public that Legislative Republicans will do everything in our power to give your children the greatest potential for opportunity, prosperity and a vibrant life. Rest assured that any plan to destroy school choice will be dead on arrival at the Legislature.

-Senator Jake Hoffman



MISSING CHILDREN IN ARIZONA

In an effort to bring great awareness to the heartbreaking issue of missing children throughout our state, I received approval to change the Senate Committee on Transportation and Technology to the Senate Committee on Transportation, Technology and Missing Children. These hearings will provide the committee with important information and testimony that will help us craft legislation to fight this issue and protect our children. According to the Arizona Department of Public Safety's website, there are currently over 1,000 missing children in our state. This is both disturbing and unacceptable. Protecting vulnerable children who are being kidnapped, murdered, or forced into the sex trafficking world needs to be a priority, especially when it's due to state negligence. As chair of this committee, I'm looking forward to having necessary and meaningful conversations with members from both parties about what can be done and use the information we gather to enact change.

-Senator David Farnsworth





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DEMOCRATS PLAY PARTISAN GAMES ON BUDGET

I'm disappointed Senate Democrats are starting this legislative session by playing partisan games at the expense of our taxpayers. They've so far been MIA on budget negotiations. The Legislature has a statutory obligation of passing a balanced budget each year. We're currently working on trimming unnecessary spending to close a one-time funding gap. As Senate Appropriations Chairman, my goal is to get feedback from all 30 Senators to resolve the shortfall. Over the past few weeks, I've sent two emails to Minority Leader Epstein requesting input on which areas of government their Caucus would prefer to reduce expenditures on, and which areas to prioritize continued funding for. I've received no responses. Additionally, we've been informed the Minority Leader is directing her Caucus not to engage with me on the budget. It's time to be adults. We want all lawmakers to be at the table, but we may have no other choice but to move forward without their input.

-Senator John Kavanagh



SECURITY THREATS AND ARIZONA'S PREPAREDNESS

We had the privilege of listening to astounding testimony from a lineup of experts regarding serious and impending threats to our national security and critical infrastructure in this week's Military Affairs, Public Safety & Border Security Committee hearing. These experts explained how China, Russia and Iran are positioning themselves to exploit and compromise our systems through various methods, including cyber espionage and fifth-generation warfare. China, in particular, is the largest threat our country faces in the cyber domain, as they now have unprecedented cyber capabilities. China has already begun launching these attacks on the U.S. and other countries in order to steal sensitive information, compromise systems, and disrupt essential services. It's time for Arizona to start preparing for what our adversaries are positioning themselves for. We need to be self-sufficient in case of an emergency at the state-level.

-Senator David Gowan





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NATIONAL HUMAN TRAFFICKING AWARENESS DAY

In light of National Human Trafficking Awareness Day this week, we want to remind you that Senate Republicans are extremely committed to tackling this issue. Sadly, Arizona has some of the highest numbers of people, including children, forced into this dark world. The issue is only being perpetuated by the chaos at our southern border, and it's time we send a message to the animals responsible for stealing the innocence of our most precious population. Our children are NOT for sale. I'm currently working on legislation for a ballot referral that would put convicted child sex traffickers behind bars for the rest of their natural life. If this passes, voters will decide whether to increase penalties for child sex traffickers and those who engage in sex with a trafficked minor. The safety and wellbeing of Arizona's children is a top priority for me and our entire Republican caucus, and this is an initiative we can pass to help ensure it.



-Senator Shawna Bolick



DUDE RANCHES IN ARIZONA

We celebrated Dude Ranch Day at the Capitol this week, and I was excited to use my roping skills with my Senate colleagues! Senators Kerr, Borrelli, and Bennett were especially impressive. Arizona's dude ranches allow "city-slickers" to become immersed in the western culture and heritage our state prides itself on with a great outdoor getaway focusing on local ranching traditions and the cowboy lifestyle. These all-inclusive vacation destinations provide visitors with adventures like horseback riding, fishing, hiking, shooting, rock climbing, cattle drives, roping, western dancing, panning for gold, and more! Your day usually ends with an incredible home-cooked, country-style meal and a beautiful Arizona sunset. We're lucky to have a number of great dude ranches in our state. If you have an Instagram account, I encourage you to view the fun highlight reel we created [here](#).



-Senator Janae Shamp





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