

This was the last week for members of the Arizona House of Representatives to introduce new legislation, and they introduced more than 100 bills in a last-minute rush to pursue their priorities for the year. More than 1,100 bills have been introduced since the beginning of the year, but it appears that approximately 60% of introduced proposals are unlikely to advance.

Both the House and Senate spent long hours debating and advancing proposals that are moving through the legislative process, including proposals to [eliminate funding](#) for desegregation programs in schools and gradually [expand Empowerment Scholarship Account](#) public funds to all students who want to attend a private school. Universities also would see significant changes under a House proposal to [move oversight authority](#) from the Arizona Board of Regents to new oversight boards for each university.

Numerous health policy changes moved forward this week as committees approved proposals to expand the testing and charges for [newborn health screenings](#) and allow children to use FDA-approved [sunscreen](#) at school and summer camps. A bill to [increase transparency](#) in operations and disciplinary actions of state health regulatory boards was approved, as was a proposal that would require the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS) to establish an [internal clinical oversight review committee](#) to evaluate data and performance metrics for AHCCCS initiatives.



House committees also approved an [extension of benefits](#) from the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program, a controversial set of four bills that would [alter the process of voter initiatives](#) in Arizona, and a proposal that would ask voters to [increase the state gas tax](#).

Next week marks a significant turning point in the legislative session: February 17 is the last date for House and Senate committees to consider legislation introduced by one of their members. After that, the Senate will consider House bills and the House will consider bills already approved by the Senate. Expect the legislature to spend very long days in committee hearings as a result.

Budget Update

House and Senate Appropriations Committees focused on education funding priorities this week, as they heard from university presidents and the Arizona Department of Education. House budget subcommittees studied the funding levels of smaller state agencies, including tourism and financial oversight entities.

Behind the scenes, the House and Senate may not be on the same track as they prepare for budget negotiations. Senate President Steve Yarbrough (R-Chandler) told *The Arizona Capitol Times* this week that he is concerned the House process of building a budget from the “bottom up” with legislator input rather than beginning negotiations from the Governor’s budget proposal will slow their completion of a budget proposal. The House budget committee chairman claims they could be ready to release a budget proposal by March, however, and House members of both political parties say they appreciate the chance to more thoroughly understand what is going into a proposal.

While quiet analysis of budget priorities and support continues behind the scenes, budget committees will continue their hearings. Next week, their focus turns to the Department of Child Safety and the Department of Economic Security. House subcommittees will consider smaller state agency budgets like the Department of Veterans’ Services.

Priority Legislation

- [HB 2134](#) (schools; children’s camps; sunscreen use), which would authorize children’s use and possession of FDA-approved sunscreen, passed the House Committee on Health 9-0.
- [HB 2135](#) (health care workforce; data), which would create a Task Force on Health Care Professional Workforce Data to research the creation of a resource center on data from health care professionals, is not expected to receive a hearing in the House Committee on Rules.
- [HB 2194](#) (indoor tanning; minors; restricted use), which would prevent minors from using tanning devices, was approved by the House 39-19.
- [HB 2208](#) (inhalers; administration; schools; authorized entities), which increases authorities for schools to offer inhalers to students when permitted to do so by a physician, was held in the House Committee on Health.
- [HB 2335](#) (tobacco possession; sale; age; signage), which is the “T21” proposal to prevent access to tobacco and vaping products before the age of 21), passed the House Committee on Health 7-2 last week but is not expected to receive a hearing in the House Committee on Commerce.
- [HB 2372](#) (public benefits; fee waivers; requirements), which extends TANF benefits from 12 to 24 months under specified circumstances and establishes a variety of new reporting and fraud prevention measures, passed the House Committee on Appropriations 13-0.
- [HB 2476](#) (trauma-informed care training), which requires DCS to provide three hours of trauma-informed care training for foster parents and employees, was held in the House Committee on Health.
- [SB 1001](#) (civil liability; minors; animals; vehicle), which provides civil liability protection for bystanders to intervene for the protection of children and animals, received preliminary approval from the Senate.

- [SB 1080](#) (teenage drivers; communication devices prohibited), which prohibits a minor from using a wireless communication device while driving – except for emergencies, received preliminary approval from the Senate.
- [SB 1368](#) (newborn screening; fees), which increases the cost of the first newborn screening panel from \$30 to \$36, passed the Senate Committee on Health & Human Services 5-0.

Committee Advances Newborn SCID Screening Proposal

In his State of the State speech to kick off the 2017 legislative session, Governor Ducey called for an expansion of newborn screenings to include testing for Severe Combined Immunodeficiency, or SCID. “We have the power to save these precious human lives,” the Governor said. “So let’s act with urgency.”

This week, the Senate Committee on Health and Welfare agreed with the Governor’s wishes, unanimously approving a proposal that would raise testing fees and expand the newborn screening panels.

[SB 1368](#) was supported by [parents of children](#) who had suffered from SCID, and by the AzAAP and a variety of health care advocacy organizations. It now moves to the full Senate for consideration.

House Committee Approves Family Caregiver Income Tax Credit

Families who serve as caregivers to a loved one would qualify for an income tax credit in Arizona under a proposal approved by the House Committee on Ways & Means this week. [HB 2209](#), which would give a credit of 50% of qualifying expenses up to \$1,000 for individuals making \$75,000 or less per year, received bipartisan support from the committee. AARP, which supports the legislation, said there is a growing population of Arizonans responsible for elderly adults and other family members who require costly live-in care. “Budgets are tight,” acknowledged one supporter, “but family caregivers are truly the unsung heroes. I think this will be a great move for our state.”

The bill drew some opposition from committee members who opposed the use of resources for what they viewed to be growing demands on government. The majority of the committee, however, supported the bill for that same reason, praising it as a small step toward funding for individuals who had not received assistance from underfunded state health and welfare programs.

The proposal now moves to the full House for consideration.

House, Senate Advance New Licensing Options for Those Convicted of Crimes

House and Senate committees have approved proposals that would expand professional licensure to those who have been convicted of non-violent crimes. The sponsor of [HB 2290](#), Representative Tony Rivero (R-Peoria), said Arizona needs to provide the ability for those who have served time for crime to return to work. Supporters of the bill agreed with him, citing evidence that employment reduces recidivism.

The bill, and an identical proposal in the Senate, would authorize a short-term professional license for up to a year, with some reporting and oversight requirements for those on community supervision, probation, or other post-conviction measures. The idea drew bipartisan support from legislators who believe the bill will offer a path forward for those who have served time for a past mistake.

The identical bills in the House and Senate will allow the legislature to fast-track the bill to the Governor's desk.