

It's Inauguration Day weekend, and both Governor Doug Ducey and State Treasurer Jeff DeWit are in DC for the festivities. Another Arizona resident will be staying in the nation's Capitol beyond this week: Stephanie Grisham, communications director to former Arizona House Speaker David Gowan and former Arizona Attorney General Tom Horne, [was recently named](#) as the White House Deputy Press Secretary for the incoming President.



The focus on DC did not slow progress at the state Capitol, though. Legislative policy committees enthusiastically began their work on Tuesday, and legislators continued behind the scenes tasks to finalize details on bills still to be introduced. Over 500 bills have been proposed thus far this session – far lower than the average rate of bill introductions in past sessions. The slow pace may not last, though, since legislators still have time to introduce new legislation.

Some proposals have already become hot topics, like [texting while driving](#), school [curriculum on ethnic studies](#), [gas taxes](#), who [should serve](#) on the State Board of Education, [how much car insurance](#) should be required for Arizona drivers, and whether some functions at the Arizona State Hospital should be [privatized](#).

Focus on those high-profile issues has allowed hundreds of other proposals to be quietly introduced without drawing attention. For example, [one bill](#) would establish an alcohol and drug monitoring program in the Attorney General's office to track individuals with multiple DUI or DWI convictions. [Another](#) would require universities and community colleges to provide free tuition to an online education program for qualified residents in rural areas of Arizona, and others would clarify policy for [taxing greenhouses](#) and establish [a state mineral](#) (hint: it's not copper!).

The pace of legislative action will speed up next week, as more bills are introduced and committee agendas grow longer. [Click here](#) for more information on next week's schedule.

Legislators are motivated by deadlines that govern the time allotted for each step of the legislative process:

January 30	Last day for Senate bill introductions
February 10	Last Day for House bill introductions
February 17	Last day for consideration of bills in the first legislative chamber
March 24	Last day for consideration of bills in the second legislative chamber
April 14	Last day for conference committees
April 18	100 th day of session
April 22	Statutory last day of session (may be extended by legislative leaders)

Priority Legislation

- [HB 2134](#) (schools; children’s camps; sunscreen use), which would authorize children’s use and possession of FDA-approved sunscreen, was referred to the House Committee on Health.
- [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, was assigned to the House Committee on Rules.
- [HB 2194](#) (indoor tanning; minors; restricted use), which would prevent minors from using tanning devices, was referred to the House Committee on Health.
- [HB 2198](#) (committee; childhood experiences; effects; prevention), which establishes an Adverse Childhood Experiences Study Committee to evaluate prevention and treatment of adverse childhood experiences, was referred to the House Committee on Rules.
- [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, has not yet been referred to a committee.
- [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), has not yet been referred to a committee.
- [SB 1080](#) (teenage drivers; communication devices prohibited), which prohibits a minor from using a wireless communication device while driving – except for emergencies, was referred to the Senate Committee on Transportation & Technology.
- [SB 1131](#) (schools; K-3 reading program), which would require the Arizona Department of Education to develop guidance for K-3 reading programs, was referred to the Senate Committee on Education.
- [SB 1133](#) (certified nurse midwives; nurse practitioners), which would allow the Board of Nursing to adopt rules for the certification of a certified nurse midwife, was referred to the Senate Committee on Health & Human Services.

Budget Update

The week began with a focus on the state budget, as staff from the legislature and Governor Ducey's office presented information on the budget options before them. Revenue forecasts, which often set the tone for debate on budget priorities, are approximately \$37 million apart on their forecasts – a fact that makes the Governor's office optimistic about what is a relatively small difference in predictions. Legislative staff and some Senate leaders, however, point to differences in predictions for growth in state-funded health care programs, as well, and are concerned the Governor's rosier estimates may not properly prepare for large potential impacts like the repeal of the Affordable Care Act.

While budget analysts focus on revenues, many legislators and advocacy groups are debating the priorities of the Governor's spending proposals. Several top areas of disagreement between legislators and the Governor emerged this week, including a proposed sweep of highway infrastructure funds that local governments believe will negatively impact transportation across the state. A proposed raise for teachers is also generating early debate: the [Superintendent of Public Instruction](#) said more money is needed for teacher salaries, and leaders of Joint Technical Education Districts (JTED) [expressed concern](#) that the K-12 focus did not include support for their programs. The Governor's office says those views do not consider the other education priorities in his budget, or the funding that flowed to schools from the approval of Proposition 123 last year.

Early reactions to the budget will now merge into more in-depth analysis of the options and revenues. Appropriations committees in the House and Senate are scheduled to begin briefings on budget proposals and needs of major state agencies. As the negotiations on a budget continue, both the Governor and members of the legislature have said they are eager to participate in the ongoing discussion.

House Committee Repeals Fingerprint Mandate for State Assistance

A House committee unanimously approved the repeal of Arizona's fingerprint mandate for SNAP and TANF benefits this week. Arguing that the mandate "just costs the state money unnecessarily," the bill's sponsor, Representative John Allen (R-Scottsdale), said the program does not significantly enhance fraud prevention efforts since other safeguards already exist.

[HB 2091](#) is supported by a wide range of advocates for low-income individuals, food banks, and public health; Morpho Trak, a global fingerprinting and security company, was the only registered opposition.

The bill now moves to the full House for consideration.

House Policy Stalls Health Care Workforce Data Committee

A policy against the formation of new study committees prevented a bill on healthcare workforce data from advancing this week. Representative Heather Carter (R-Cave Creek) introduced [HB 2135](#) to create a legislative panel tasked with evaluating how to best collect and use health care professional workforce data. But the bill was not heard in committee after House Speaker J.D. Mesnard (R-Chandler) expressed opposition to all new study committees. Since legislators can host additional study and meet with experts without legislation, Mesnard said he believes formal committees are rarely needed. He agreed to consider requests from any legislator who believes a study committee is truly required.

Special Education Teacher Loan Program Funding Moves Forward

The Senate Committee on Education advanced new resources for special education teacher loan forgiveness programs this week, unanimously approving \$600,000 in funding for the Mathematics, Science, and Special Education Teacher Loan Forgiveness Program. The Program, which was established in 2007, grants up to \$7,000 per year for up to three years; recipients agree to teach one of these subject areas for the number of years they receive loan forgiveness funding, plus one year, in an area of the state with teacher shortages.

[SB 1034](#) extends the life of the Program, which would expire in July if the legislature does not act to extend it, and appropriates the funding. A companion bill, [SB 1040](#), would expand access of the program to include any teachers willing to serve in rural, low-income, or tribal lands in Arizona.

“It’s a wonderful program,” stated Senator Sylvia Allen (R-Snowflake). She sponsored both bills, and believes her legislation will expand the impact and success of loan forgiveness in high-need areas.