

Legislature Readies for 2017 Session

As 2016 winds to a close, state legislators are actively preparing for the new year. Twenty-five new legislators will be sworn in on January 9, with eight current legislators moving between the House and Senate and fifty-seven returning for another term in their current seat. [Committee memberships](#) and schedules have been established and [bills are already being introduced](#) for consideration in the 2017 session.

But the current legislative term is not over yet. Many committees created to evaluate specific topics have been active, and are finalizing reports and recommendations for changes. These committees include [transportation resources](#), [peace officer employment](#), and [gold bonds](#). Proposals on these topics could be introduced in the coming weeks.

As bills are introduced and the legislative session nears, additional updates will be provided on relevant issues and action.

Key Legislative Dates

- January 9 The start of the 2017 legislative session/Governor Ducey's State of the State address
- January 13 Governor Ducey's budget proposal released
- January 17 Appropriations Committee discussion of budget proposals

Legislative Panel Considers Sunrise Proposals

House and Senate health committees convened last week for a lengthy discussion of seven sunrise proposals that would have expanded regulation of medical practices in Arizona. Two proposals that would have expanded the scope of practice for naturopaths failed to receive approval: the Arizona Naturopathic Medical Association withdrew their [attempt](#) to administer antibiotics intravenously, and the committee did not approve their proposal to allow naturopaths to [authorize vaccination waivers](#).

A proposal to [expand the authorities](#) of licensed pharmacists was approved, though it was substantially narrowed. The health committees approved the Arizona Pharmacy Association's desire to allow pharmacists to administer oral fluoride varnish, to prescribe some smoking cessation products (not to include non-nicotine replacement prescriptions), and to extend routine, non-controlled chronic medication prescriptions. Ongoing debate on these changes is certain: the Pharmacy Association sought authority to extend prescriptions for 30-60 days, but the committee reluctantly approved 14 days and instructed those interested in the proposal to continue to negotiate the appropriate length of time, and conditions for the prescription extension.

Proposals approved in the sunrise process will be introduced for debate in the upcoming legislative session.

TANF Cuts Bring Fiscal Impact to State

There is renewed debate over Arizona's cuts to the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program (TANF). State lawmakers significantly cut the program in recent state budgets, reducing TANF benefits to one year in the lifetime of any recipient and making Arizona's assistance to needy families the lowest in the nation.

Now, some are saying the cuts have negatively impacted the state budget rather than saving money as some expected. Those receiving benefits from TANF are required to surrender their child support collections to the state – funds that are divided between the federal government and state coffers. The reduction in TANF participants means the state is not receiving the funds it previously brought in and is failing to generate matching federal funds for child support programs. The Department of Economic Security's child support division predicts a \$3 million shortfall, which leads to a loss of \$6 million of federal dollars. The Department is requesting an appropriation of \$3 million to balance the budget this fiscal year.

It is not yet clear whether their request will be approved. The updated financial impacts are a new addition to the argument, however, which has previously been centered on political viewpoints on the proper role of government assistance.