

YELLOW SHEET REPORT

NEWS NOTES AND GOSSIP

FANN FAILS FANTASTICALLY

After the House last night threw down the gauntlet at the Senate, saying it would return on June 10 or when the Senate had enough votes to pass a budget, a defiant Fann announced the Senate would pass a budget today with or without the house – only to throw in the towel this afternoon and (allegedly) head off for Hawaii. Some lawmakers started the day on a hopeful note, and several railbirds speculated optimistically that last night’s meltdown could be just the thing to jumpstart negotiations and lead to a breakthrough. Shope told our reporter this morning that he felt genuinely optimistic about passing a budget today – “genuinely” meaning

unlike when he was in House leadership and he had to put up a front of optimism even when he didn’t feel it. Leaders planned to remove tax credits that the conservative members, including Petersen, didn’t like and put them up for votes apart from the budget, facilitating conservatives to vote for the overall package. Senate leaders and the governor were working with Boyer to reach a compromise on the issue of cuts to cities and towns. Ugenti-Rita showed up for work. Things were looking all around promising. Even the House seemed prepared to come back and pass the Senate’s budget after Memorial Day, Toma said, and was prepared to make amendments to deal with the holdout Republicans, including more money for local governments so they don’t lose out on funding under the flat tax proposal. But the potential breakthrough always came with a deadline – as rumor has it Fann has a scheduled vacation to Hawaii this weekend. And Fann blew the deadline. “Last night we thought we were close and all we needed to do was tie up a few loose ends. When we came in this morning, it was apparent that we were further apart,” she told our reporter after it became clear she couldn’t whip the votes. The House sent her a list of demands, including removing spending that GOP senators had negotiated to include, she said. Senators also came up with new lists of things they wanted to add or remove to the budget over the past 12 hours. She’s not sure that either chamber will actually return to pass a budget on June 10. Right now, there are three options, Fann said: return on or before June 10 if she and Bowers know there’s an agreement; make a new motion to recess to a future date if a plan isn’t ready by June 10; or make everyone start coming to work again.



EVEN OUR INTERNS CAN'T TAKE VACATION DURING SESSION

Fann refused to confirm the widespread rumor that she was heading to Hawaii this weekend, but when our reporter warned that we’re going to print it, she didn’t deny the rumor, either. Instead, she said that lots of people have vacations scheduled, but refused to say whether she was among them. She said her most immediate plan is to see her doctor for a shoulder X-ray because she injured hers falling on the stairs. Almost every railbird our reporter has spoken to in the past couple weeks has brought up the rumor, and a source today shared that Fann’s assistant was talking today about how many carry-ons she had and whether she had received a flu shot. Another source claimed that Fann received a Covid test yesterday. Under Hawaii’s travel requirements, a traveler must register with the state’s online system and upload a negative test. The decision to abandon the Senate in the middle of budget negotiations was unprecedented. “I’ve definitely never seen a Senate president plan or see through a tropical vacation in May with no state budget,

and a circus audit,” one Republican said, adding even rank-and-file lawmakers don’t dare plan things in May. “It’s just astounding. It’s self-care at its highest form... It’s un-f*cking-believable.” The source said they’re big fans of Fann as a lawmaker, but that she has absolutely failed as a Senate president. Still, the source said she “showed some sobriety” in calling it quits early, rather than dragging it late into the night before throwing in the towel.

FISH GOTTA SWIM, BIRDS GOTTA FLY...

While staffers are likely unhappy with the prolonged session, there’s one group of Capitol dwellers that sees a silver lining to the ongoing legislative deadlock: lobbyists. One lobbyist told our reporter today that Republicans’ problems with the flat tax proposal means it will likely be trimmed slightly, freeing up funding for small-dollar priorities. “Lobbyists will lobby – that’s what they do. That’s their jam,” one lobbyist said. More time to lobby, and more trimming of the budget means a greater likelihood that lobbyists will be able to squeeze out \$1 million here, \$10 million there for their clients’ priorities. And there’s another upside for the lobbying class, the source said. “We still get to charge clients for another month.”

TEAMING UP WITH RACISTS IS ONE WAY TO LAUNCH A CAMPAIGN

A potential primary challenger for Schweikert urged a known white nationalist to help denounce a shared enemy who sued both of them. Elijah Norton, who opened an exploratory committee to run in CD6, emailed back and forth with Martin Lindstedt, a pastor of an Aryan Christian church in Missouri about a man named Bryan Reo. In the 2016 exchange ([LINK](#) – caution – it’s a white nationalist site that uses racist language), Norton offered to pay Lindstedt money to remove a post about him that appeared when Googling his now-former company, CarGuard. (Reo sued Lindstedt too ([LINK](#))). “I know you probably hate Bryan Reo (as do I) as I noticed he has a crazy lawsuit against you also,” Norton wrote to the white supremacist. “[B]ut I would like to implore you to please delete your post about my company. The reason is that I am in a business that customers heavily Google and it could hurt my business to have that post up. I would be happy to compensate you for your time for removing it if you’d like.” The email chain indicates the two spoke on the phone, then Lindstedt replied that “we can work on sending Ol’ [N-word] Lips and his alleged spawner to where they belong in a federal prison and to end this sh*t against others permanently.” He signed off “Hail Victory!!!” Norton replied, “Thank you very much! ... Anything you need from me to help in this legal fight against Reo just let me know and I will be more than happy to help.”



OH YEAH, THAT EMAIL CHAIN

When our reporter called Norton today, he claimed he didn’t know who Lindstedt was, but when our reporter told him about the emails, he instantly remembered the entire chain of events perfectly. He said he never had to pay Lindstedt money and that the post in question was removed. He also told our reporter he does not identify as a white supremacist. “Not at all. No, of course not,” he said, adding “we had several different people of minorities, ethnicities working for us.” He said in hindsight, they should have gone about getting the post removed differently. “I’m not a white supremacist in any way shape or form. CarGuard’s current CEO is African American, who I hired. We’ve had numerous people from numerous different races, ethnicities, religious backgrounds working for us ... The assertion that I am somehow a white supremacist is ridiculous, untrue and verifiably false,” he told our reporter. “I’ve had very good friends that are African American and Jewish and of all faiths and religions. So no, I don’t identify as that.”

DOING WHAT THE MEDIA IS TOO POOR TO DO

Maricopa County Superior Court Judge Michael Kemp scheduled oral arguments in American Oversight's lawsuit to pry loose details of the Senate's audit, including who's funding it. American Oversight, a liberal watchdog group ([LINK](#)), is suing the state Senate, Fann and Petersen over their refusal or inability to produce public records about the audit's cost, funding and training. The Senate's motion to dismiss or for summary judgement is due June 9. The plaintiffs will have until June 23 to respond. Oral arguments are set for 1:30 pm on July 7. The Senate turned over 53 pages of audit-related communications among Fann, Ken Bennett, Cyber Ninjas CEO Doug Logan and others earlier this week ([LINK](#)). American Oversight is still demanding records related to the cost of the audit, who's funding it, auditor/vendor agreements and training and procedure information.



THOSE ITCHY FINGERS GET THE BEST OF US ALL



Conservative Twitter celebrated Petersen's announcement today that Arizona had passed a bill aimed at stopping teachers from teaching about some controversial topics, particularly race-related ones, in ways Republicans don't like. "Arizona just passed out a ban on teaching critical race theory in schools," Petersen wrote in a tweet sent at 12:20 p.m. during the vote. "PHENOMENAL!" quote-tweeted Republican and former Phoenix mayoral candidate Merissa Hamilton. "Thank you, AZ!" state GOP Chairwoman Kelli Ward quote-tweeted. "Great news! Racism does not fix racism," wrote former congressional candidate Josh Barnett. The only problem? The bill he was touting, S1532 (impeding school operations; civil liability), actually failed. Around the time Petersen sent his tweet, Boyer was explaining how he couldn't vote for a bill that puts prosecutors in charge of investigating what teachers say in their classrooms. With the Democrats unanimously opposed, the bill failed 14-16 – Livingston voted nay so he could move to bring it up for reconsideration and said he has some amendments he wants to work on, so while the bill didn't pass, it isn't dead yet. "Actually, we just killed the bill by a bipartisan vote of 14-16," Quezada quote-tweeted Petersen. "And actually, it has nothing to do with #CriticalRaceTheory. And actually, this tweet is coming from the dude who is behind the #fraudit so, yeah." Petersen later deleted the tweet and put one up saying "AZ passed a ban on critical race theory. It prohibits govt funds used to train CRT or requiring employees be trained in CRT," referring to S1074 (governance; audits; training), which did pass the Senate on a party-line vote.

THAT'S ONE WAY TO OUT-FINCHEM FINCHEM

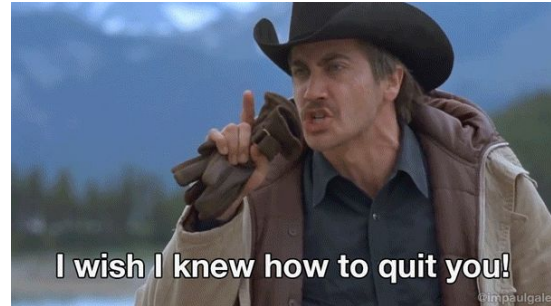
Ugenti-Rita ditched work yesterday to announce she's "transitioning" to the Secretary of State's Office – ignoring that she still has to win an election while simultaneously taking a cheap shot at trans people. "I'm going to be transitioning – not that kind of transitioning," she told the assembled crowd at a Scottsdale golf course, to raucous applause ([LINK](#)). "Not Caitlin Jenner transitioning – a different kind." Ugenti-Rita's entrance to the race has been long expected, but her decision to announce as Senators were attempting to push through a budget package infuriated her colleagues. Borrelli grumbled on the floor that she only cared about her "little function" and Fann pointedly called the absent Republican out while running down a list of senators who were taking too long to vote on a bill. "Senator Ugenti-Rita. Oh, yeah, she's not here," Fann

said, before chuckling and saying she had to do it. Townsend, who has been at odds with Ugenti-Rita since she refused to grant many of Townsend's election bills hearings in a Senate committee, took a selfie from the floor and tagged other Republican lawmakers who were working that evening. "Thank you, Arizona, for sending us to work for you," she wrote.

DONALD TRUMP IS A HELL OF A DRUG

After Trump recently called him "one of the worst Republican governors" in the country, among other recent cheap shots, Ducey again pledged his fealty to the former president, calling him, somewhat reluctantly, the leader of the Republican Party. In a roundtable discussion with *Fox News*' Sean Hannity and five other Republican governors, Hannity asked if Trump still is the leader of the Republican Party and Ducey was told to answer yes or no. "Well he's the former president, he's the largest voice," Ducey said at first, adding that he received more than 75 million votes.

Hannity asked twice more, and Ducey finally said "yes." During the interview, Ducey talked the least of the group, and he again dodged talking about the Senate's audit of Maricopa County's ballots. But he patted himself on the back for his Covid response – not mentioning that Arizona twice became a worldwide hotspot for Covid and now ranks sixth for deaths per capita in the country. While Ducey posted several clips of him talking with Hannity, including recycling his criticism of Biden and Harris "anti-wall and AWOL" when it comes to the border ([LINK](#)), he didn't post the clip in which he called Trump the head of the party ([LINK](#)).



·WAKE UP CALL·

Arizona regulators adopt revamped clean-energy rules

Arizona Daily Star

After killing a proposed mandate for 100% carbon-free power by 2050, the Arizona Corporation Commission voted to reach that goal by 2070.

Wildfire prevention gets boost from behind bars with expanded program

Cronkite News

It's important to have boots on the ground when battling wildfires. And come July 1, the Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management will be able to start putting 1,400 more boots on the ground.

Oak Flat mine fight draws support of diverse religious groups

Cronkite News

The Sikh Coalition and the San Carlos Apache would not appear to have much in common at first glance, but they have found a shared interest in the fight over a patch of land in southeastern Arizona.

State budget faces GOP opposition as debate delayed

Associated Press

Contentious division among Republican lawmakers about a state budget deal negotiated between GOP Gov. Doug Ducey and majority Republican legislative leaders is in the forefront as the Arizona House delayed a scheduled Wednesday debate.

'Sadistic Penchant for Violence': Dion Johnson Lawsuit Focuses on DPS Trooper's

Dishonesty

Phoenix New Times

A lengthy lawsuit filed by Dion Johnson's mother alleges that state trooper George Cervantes started an unnecessary fight on the freeway before shooting Johnson, who was just defending himself.

[Congress warned of a 'real and urgent' drought crisis throughout the West](#)

Arizona Mirror

A drought crisis unfolding across the West will require short-term relief and massive, long-term federal funding to help states weather the effects of climate change, state water managers and lawmakers said at a U.S. House hearing on Tuesday.

[U.S. Sens. Kyrsten Sinema and Mark Kelly can stop the GOP from disenfranchising voters. Will they?](#)

Arizona Mirror (Opinion, Reginald Bolding)

For decades, the Arizona legislature has been controlled by the Republican Party. Four of the last five governors have been Republicans. For the first time in our state's history, we have two Democratic U.S. senators and a majority of our congressional delegation is Democrats.

[Did Arizona Senate President Fann admit the election audit is a sham?](#)

Arizona Republic (Opinion, EJ Montini)

Republican Maricopa County Supervisor Bill Gates says she told her as much back in November.

[Trump is sabotaging what may be the Arizona GOP's best hope of recapturing a Senate seat](#)

Arizona Republic (Opinion, Laurie Roberts)

Donald Trump is sabotaging what may be the Republicans' best chance of recapturing a Senate seat in Arizona. That tells you everything you need to know about the ex-president's priorities.

[A pipeline from the Mississippi River won't solve our water problems, but this might](#)

Arizona Republic (Opinion, Joanna Allhands)

Arizona is taking important steps to find new water sources. Pursuing floodwater on the Mississippi River, however, is not one of them.

[Arizona Democrats put the brakes on a voting bill, but Republicans won't give up](#)

Arizona Republic (Opinion, Elvia Diaz)

Arizona Democrats put the brakes on a bill requiring that voters provide proof when returning their early ballot. But the fight is far from over

·PRESS RELEASES·

Statement from Senate Democrats on Budget Stalemate

PHOENIX- Senate Democratic Leadership has released the following statement on the Senate adjourning without passing a budget.

“This budget stalemate has been a disservice to the people of Arizona who look up to us as leaders. While Democrats are ready to fight for a budget that rebuilds, revitalizes and reinvests in Arizonans, Republicans have decided to take a vacation instead of working with us to pass a people’s budget. When we return, they’ll continue forcing through a budget that completely ignores the critical needs of Arizonans, like investing in our schools, children’s healthcare, teacher pay, affordable housing and more. Rather, our Republican colleagues have decided to prioritize welfare for the wealthy with a disastrous tax plan that asks almost 90% of Arizona taxpayers to pay their own tax dollars to subsidize the taxes of the wealthiest of Arizonans.

Arizona doesn't need more tax cuts that will only help corporations and the wealthiest. After a decade of slashed budgets, we have a real opportunity to meet the needs of our students, senior citizens and most vulnerable. Arizona needs to fund COVID recovery for families and small businesses and invest in services and programs that benefit all Arizonans. The Republican budget does none of those things. Senate Democrats have a budget proposal that would help Arizona's working families restore, recover and rebuild from the COVID-19 pandemic. The \$12.9 billion Democratic plan would raise teacher pay, make higher education more affordable, extend healthcare to uninsured children, address affordable housing shortages, reform an antiquated unemployment insurance system, invest in critical infrastructure and protect and uplift the most vulnerable Arizonans. Sadly, our republican colleagues refuse to come to the table with us and are more interested in giving out welfare for the wealthy. “

Release: Despite Republican Obstruction, Economy Continues to Recover Thanks to Biden's American Rescue Plan

PHOENIX – According to new data from the Department of Labor [released today](#), **the number of Americans seeking unemployment benefits fell for the seventh week in a row to a new pandemic-era low as Democrats' American Rescue Plan helps thousands get back to work.** This comes as Arizona reached more than [50 percent](#) of adults being fully vaccinated this week—another shining success stemming from the Biden-Harris administration's investment in a nationwide vaccine program that continues to spur Arizona's economic recovery.

"Despite continued obstruction from Republican lawmakers like Andy Biggs and Debbie Lesko, President Joe Biden and Democrats in Congress continue to deliver for Arizonans," **said ADP Spokesperson Hannah Goss.** "With real partners in the White House, Arizona Democrats are working to build back our economy better than ever—and they'll continue the work of getting Arizona's working families back on their feet with or without the support of their Republican colleagues."

Communities across Arizona continue to receive federal funding from President Biden's American Rescue Plan, which passed Congress without the support of a single Arizona Republican. In the weeks since being signed into law, the historic recovery plan [has provided Arizona](#) with nearly \$10 billion in state and local aid, helped communities rebuild, put money in people's pockets, and lifted 112,000 Arizona children out of poverty.

Governor Ducey Announces \$550,000 From AZ Coronavirus Relief Fund To Support Mental Health Organizations

PHOENIX — Governor Doug Ducey today announced \$550,000 from the AZ Coronavirus Relief Fund has been allocated to 13 organizations in Arizona that offer mental health support services for adults and children.

As vaccinations increase across the country and more activities return to normal, experts warn that people may continue to suffer negative mental health effects as a result of the pandemic. The National Alliance of Mental Illness (NAMI) reports that more than half of Americans say that COVID-19 has had a negative impact on their mental health.

"Even before the pandemic, we have been working diligently to address issues such as isolation and disconnection, especially among our young people," said Governor Ducey. "COVID-19 has made that effort more urgent. These dollars will bolster the efforts of more than a dozen organizations around the state working to provide mental health support to those in need. As we move forward, we must make sure we are supporting the whole health of our state's citizens."

"Text messages to our suicide prevention hotline for teens increased over 450% during the pandemic," said Michelle Moorhead, Executive Director, Teen Lifeline. "The grant from the Arizona Coronavirus Relief Fund supports our statewide crisis text service that provides a lifesaving connection to hope for teens who feel disconnected, overwhelmed, isolated or depressed."

Among the mental health services offered by the recipient organizations include youth and teen after-school programs, suicide prevention, adult mental health recovery, behavioral health therapy and more.

Organizations receiving funding include:

Arizona Behavioral Health Corporation
Black Family & Children's Services
Horses Help
Hunkapi
ICAN
Our Place Clubhouse
Native Americans For Community Action
National Alliance on Mental Health Arizona
Mentally Ill Kids in Distress
Reigning Grace
Teen Lifeline
Therapeutic Riding of Tucson (TROT)
West Yavapai Guidance Clinic

“The COVID crisis has deeply affected the mental wellness of many communities in Arizona, in particular those with low/no access to mental health resources,” said Shelby Pedersen, CEO, ICAN. “This generous grant from the Coronavirus Relief Fund will allow us to bring these much-needed resources to underserved youth, particularly during the summer months when students are out of school and further disconnected from vital support systems. We are so grateful for the funding and will put it to immediate use to better the mental wellness of school-aged children.”

“Native Americans for Community Action, Inc. (NACA) is very thankful and delighted to receive this funding from the Arizona Coronavirus Relief Fund so that we may further our mental health services to the community,” said Jeff Axtell, CEO, Native Americans for Community Action, Inc. “With this funding we can provide adjunctive therapy services, transportation and ceremonial assistance for our clients who have been devastated by this pandemic over the past year. We appreciate the Governor’s office in that they are assisting our Indigenous relatives with access to the much-needed mental health services that they may otherwise go without, thank you!”

“As a mental health organization we have continued to provide live, animal therapy services through an unprecedented time,” said Terra Schaad, Founder and Executive Director, Hunkapi. “The pandemic has shown us the need for connection, touch, and relationship and our horses are able to provide those things when human touch and friendships are less common and accessible than before. Receiving this grant allows Hunkapi to continue in its mission to ‘Teach the world to fear less and love more,’ and open up services to more youth at risk and trauma survivors. We are honored and incredibly grateful to have been selected as a recipient from the Governor’s office.”

“The isolation associated with the pandemic has left its scars on so many and this grant is a complete game changer for Therapeutic Riding of Tucson,” said Jeff Copfer, Executive Director, Therapeutic Riding of Tucson. “Our part-time therapist specializing in equine facilitated psychotherapy, will now be able to dedicate her time to TROT and help more in need of healing as a result of COVID-19. She will begin hosting teen support groups, women’s support groups, family sessions, and take on more individual sessions. Additionally, the grant allows us to purchase supplies for group sessions, build a confidence course, and a shade structure for our round pen to facilitate counseling sessions during summer.”

The AZ Coronavirus Relief Fund was established by Governor Ducey as part of the Arizona Together Initiative to provide financial support to non-profit organizations serving Arizonans in need statewide during the pandemic. The fund collected \$10 million in private donations and has disbursed roughly \$9.3 million to date.

Funding requests are reviewed and approved by an independent five-member committee working in consultation with Arizona’s philanthropic community. To date, funding has been allocated for the purchase of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for frontline medical personnel; to aid non-profit organizations such as food banks, homeless shelters, domestic violence facilities, and other institutions; to equip low-income students with learning technology; and more.

One hundred percent of contributions are being directly distributed to organizations supporting Arizonans during the COVID-19 outbreak and recovery effort.

More information can be found [HERE](#).

Arizona Clean Energy Rules Back on Track

A Bipartisan Vote of the Arizona Corporation Commission Advances Rules

PHOENIX — At the request of Commissioner Sandra Kennedy, the Arizona Corporation Commission reconsidered and passed a clean energy rules package on Wednesday that will modernize Arizona’s electric system. In a 3-2 vote, Democratic Commissioners Sandra Kennedy and Anna Tovar were joined by Republican Jim O’Connor in supporting the package. A similar package of measures was rejected by Commissioners in early May.

The rules set the state’s first carbon-reduction standard, continue and enhance its successful energy efficiency standard, improve and increase accountability for future energy planning by utilities, require utilities to support communities impacted by coal plant closure through the favorable siting of renewable energy projects, and establish the nation’s first distributed solar and storage requirement.

The vote comes after three years of workshops, proposals and input by community organizations, low-income and clean energy advocates, businesses, faith leaders and utilities to support a robust set of measures to set the state’s utilities on a path to clean energy and address climate change. The rules will now go through a new public comment process and come back for a final vote later this year.

“Creating a comprehensive set of clean energy rules ensures the state is economically competitive with our neighbors and creates policy certainty that will spur investment in Arizona,” said **Amanda Ormond, Director of Western Grid**

Group. “Increasingly, businesses and local governments demand clean energy because they know that is what the public wants.”

“Early action on reducing carbon emissions to address our climate crisis is critical,” said **Sandy Bahr, Chapter Director for Sierra Club’s Grand Canyon (Arizona) Chapter.** “These rules include an important carbon standard to reduce emissions 50 percent by 2032, as well as standards for energy efficiency and distributed storage that will help our state move forward on reducing emissions. Sierra Club appreciates the Commission moving these Clean Energy Rules forward and to seeing final adoption later this year.”

“Electricity customers are the winners with today’s rules vote. Continuation and expansion of energy saving programs by utilities will allow low-income, home and business customers access to programs that will save them energy and money,” said **Ellen Zuckerman, Co-Director of the Utility Program for the Southwest Energy Efficiency Project.** “In this challenging economic climate, providing a full array of energy savings programs will pay dividends to customers and the state as a whole by making homes and businesses more energy efficient.”

“As Arizona transitions from coal to clean energy resources, our coal-impacted communities need to see benefits from clean energy investments,” said **Nicole Horsherder, executive director of Tó Nizhóní Ání.** “This energy package includes the first obligation for utilities that benefited from dirty coal power to support communities that want to be included in the clean energy future by ensuring that impacted Tribal and non-tribal communities are prioritized.”

“These rules include an innovative provision to couple energy storage with distributed solar energy systems, providing the opportunity for homes and businesses to be more energy independent and resilient,” said **Nicole LaSlavic, Executive Director of the Arizona Solar Energy Industries Association.**

“Commissioners today demonstrated a serious commitment to modernizing Arizona’s Energy Rules and ensuring years of public participation were not lost,” said **Ronny Sandoval, Regulatory Director, Interior West for Vote Solar.** “Critically, these rules preserve the near-term commitments to carbon reductions that would result in expanded energy options, cleaner air, and greater economic opportunities for all Arizonans.”

“This was an important step in the right direction,” said **Rev. Doug Bland, Arizona Interfaith Power & Light.** “We thank Commissioners Kennedy, Tovar and O’Connor for finding a way to move these energy rules forward. Their foresight will be good for ratepayers, good for the environment, and good for the future. Faith leaders around the state affirm that robust energy rules and a just transition from fossil fuels are two essential ways to love our neighbor.”

The original rules would have saved ratepayers’ dollars and provided enormous economic benefits. In January, [Stategen released a report](#) that found that adopting the Clean Energy Rules could not only significantly reduce carbon emissions to address the climate crisis, but could also create an [economic windfall of \\$2 billion for Arizona](#). While the rules were amended from the original, the near-term provisions passed today are still substantially the same and will result in significant benefits to ratepayers and the people of Arizona.

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Release: Even GOP Senate Campaign Chair Admits Senate Primary Will Be “Competitive” With “No Clear Front-Runner”

PHOENIX – In an interview with the [Arizona Republic](#) today, the Chair of the GOP Senate campaign arm Sen. Rick Scott admitted what’s become glaringly obvious: Arizona is barreling headlong into a “competitive GOP primary” with “no clear front-runner.”

Republicans have lost all hope of uniting behind a candidate anytime soon – one candidate already went up on TV, another potential candidate has [\\$10 million in promised support](#), and [Club for Growth](#) is ready to jump in. It’s clear this race will not only be expensive but will last right through Arizona’s August 2022 primary.

“The GOP Senate primary is gearing up to be nasty, long-running, and expensive – and National Republicans know it,” said ADP spokesperson Sarah Guggenheimer. **“Rick Scott may pretend he’s ‘unbothered’ having ‘no clear front-runner,’ but Arizona Republicans are splintering in the face of the ongoing Trump-backed ‘audit.’ This bare-knuckle primary will only further put off Arizona voters looking for a senator focused on the issues that matter, not lies and conspiracies.”**

GOP Stands Alone in Backing Arizona State Senate Audit

[Read full blog post here](#)

Contact: Paul Bentz, 602-528-3684

PHOENIX (May 27, 2021) – As Legislative leaders attempt to secure every Republican vote to pass a budget, the audit becomes a good lens to see why legislative leaders have only one seat majorities in both the House and the Senate. In 2012, Republicans enjoyed super majorities in both chambers and controlled every statewide office in Arizona.

“The issues that Republicans are running on today – fraud and tax cuts – are not issues that a majority of the Arizona electorate supports,” said Paul Bentz, Senior V.P for Research & Strategy at HighGround, Inc., [“As we pointed out](#)

[earlier this week](#), a majority of the Arizona electorate would far prefer investments in education and Arizona's cities and towns over tax cuts. The same data set reveals that a majority of likely 2022 voters oppose the audit and less than a third of voters were willing to give the auditors passing marks for their work thus far."

NOTE: This survey data was gathered before the Pennsylvania-based IT company, Wake Technology Services, Inc. resigned on Monday further complicating perceptions of the audit and its professionalism.

Chuck Coughlin, President and CEO of HighGround Inc. said, "Similar to what we saw with the [polling that we previously released](#) regarding fraud and the November 2020 election, Republicans are on an island when it comes to this audit. While it is to be expected that they would receive significant opposition from Democrats, this audit makes them face headwinds among independent and unaffiliated voters as well. As we have said before, 'never run the last election, run the election you are in now.' This issue is an electoral cul-de-sac that spells trouble for Republicans in 2022."

A majority of Republicans (76.9%) support the audit compared to 20.1% who oppose. Democratic voters are overwhelmingly in opposition (90.5%) joined by more than two-thirds of Independent and unaffiliated voters (67.7%) opposed as well. The opposition can also be felt throughout the state where opposition is 55.6% in Maricopa County, 53.1% in Pima County, and 56.0% in Greater Arizona as well.

"Campaigns are about ideas – not people. Dwelling on the past is a dangerous proposition for the GOP's electoral future. While new district lines will be drawn this year, it is critical, if Republicans want to maintain control of both chambers, they will need to be more competitive in areas where they have been losing since 2018. The sooner they move on to talk about other issues, the better their chances of securing support of unaffiliated voters who are key to winning competitive districts and statewide offices. The GOP down-slate ticket did not do poorly in 2018 or 2020, but they have lost two US Senate seats and a Presidential contest by running on issues and with candidates who were unable to appeal to the larger electorate. Continued focus on this audit or the fraud narrative will only serve to undermine their electoral success in 2022," concluded Coughlin.

In fact, the polling demonstrates that voters are less likely to vote for a candidate who supported the audit. Support for the Arizona State Senate audit moves voters about 10 points in the wrong direction which could spell electoral disaster for Republicans in swing districts which they will need to pick up to expand their one seat majorities in both chambers of the State Legislature.

In all, 59.8% of Republicans stated they would be more likely to vote for an audit backer, but their gains are likely outweighed by the losses from the other partisan demographics where 78.1% of Democrats and 51.1% of Independent and unaffiliated voters were somewhat/much less likely to support. Candidates in Rural Arizona should also take heed that only 29.8% of voters were more likely compared to a sizable 53.6% who were less likely to support an audit backer. Maricopa County was 34.1% more compared to 42.5% less while Pima County was 34.4% more compared to 40.6% less.

Paul Bentz said, "There will be a temptation for those seeking approval in their primary to run towards supporting the audit. While that will be helpful in a solidly red district, those in swing districts as well as candidates in Greater Arizona may find peril in doing so. There is no doubt that a mid-term 2022 turnout will lean more Republican, but the audit appears to mitigate advantages in this upcoming cycle that should otherwise be helpful to GOP candidates."

As for the auditors themselves, former Secretary of State Ken Bennett and the Cyber Ninjas still have a way to go in convincing the Arizona electorate that they are doing a good job. Less than a third of the overall electorate gave them an "excellent," "very good," or "okay" whereas 37% gave them a "poor" or "failing" grade. Nearly a third did not have enough information to rate their performance.

Bentz concluded, "The electorate is giving the audit team a grade of a 'D' to a borderline 'D+' right now. They will have a whole lot of ground to make up if you consider they were supposed to be done with their work by now. Combined with the overall opposition and the declining likelihood of supporting audit backing candidates, this is weak foundation upon which to build their 2022 platform. GOP statewide candidates and legislators running in competitive districts will be swimming against the electoral tide if they continue to dwell on this issue."

About the Survey

The N=400 survey was conducted among likely voters 5/20 through 5/23. The poll surveyed likely Arizona 2022 General Election voters who have a history of electoral participation and was balanced to model the likely turnout of voters across party, age, region, and gender. The sample was provided from the internal voter database maintained by HighGround.

The live interview survey of voters was conducted by HighGround Public Affairs to both landline and cell phone users. The questions regarding the audit were funded by HighGround as part of a statewide survey that tested other policy issues.

The partisan advantage was set at +8% GOP based on previous midterm election trends, including the uptick in Democratic participation in past two election cycles combined with expected increase in enthusiasm among Republicans in the Gubernatorial Election. The margin of error is $\pm 4.9\%$. For more information regarding the study, contact Paul Bentz at 602-528-3684.

Survey Demographics

The HighGround team has built a reputation of reliable and accurate polling over the past dozen years – our research has been featured on Nate Silver’s 538, Real Clear Politics, Huffington Post, and many other publications. Paul Bentz has been named back-to-back winner of “Best Pollster” by the *Arizona Capitol Times*.

“QUOTE OF THE DAY”

**“It’s just astounding. It’s self-care at its
highest form.”**

- *Railbird, on the widespread rumor that Fann is heading to
Hawaii*