



ALERT!

House to return to regular session



On May 8, after weeks of limbo, the Arizona Senate voted to adjourn sine die (end the 2020 session). Since then, senators have been framing the session as ended and its hundreds of bills as dead. But last Friday, the House of Representatives announced its plans to return to session, beginning with an in-person Rules Committee hearing on May 18. We can expect at least 10 committee hearings (including the Education committee) in the coming week, several days of floor debate that will be open to the public, and attempts to pass more than 70 previously-stalled bills, many of them controversial. These will be open for public attendance with short notice.

The House's plans to return to regular business may be pointless. When the Senate adjourned sine die, President Fann indicated she'd accept a sine die motion or "a few" pandemic-related bills from the House, but not a return to regular session. This means any bills the House takes up must have already passed the Senate. If the House sends the Senate any new or amended bills, they won't have a parliamentary process to get to the governor's desk.

But lack of parliamentary process isn't the only reason the House's move is a gamble. With the 2020 legislative session still technically under way, it's harder for lawmakers to campaign for their November reelections. State law bans contributions to incumbents from lobbyists during session. In contrast, candidates who don't currently hold office are under no such restrictions. This gives the Legislature more reason to end session and focus on campaigning for their November reelection bids.

As always, we're watching the Legislature closely, and we will update you as the situation develops. Please watch our Facebook page for updates.



What can we expect as the House returns to business?

Here are a few bills we were watching before the Legislature shuttered that may return to committees this week:

SB 1177



Support

appropriation; Ganado School Loop Road

Allots \$900,000 for repairs to Ganado School Loop Road in northeastern AZ

Sen. Jamescita Peshlakai

The Ganado School Loop Road, built in 1991, hasn't been maintained or upgraded for 27 years. It is the only point of access both to the K-12 schools for 1,388 students and 93 teachers and for the community hospital, as well as for the school buses, parents and community members. The road is hazardous in winter snow and turns to mud in the spring, and the poor drainage is eating away at neighboring farmlands. The requested funding would also add a sidewalk and other safety mechanisms, as the vast majority of Ganado students walk to school. The county will fund \$400,000 toward the road's repair; this type of matching funding is rare. Previously scheduled for House Transportation, Wednesday 3/18; may reappear this week.

SB 1357



Oppose

schools; access; instructional materials; review

Limit individualized support and responsive teaching in district and charter schools

Sen. Sylvia Allen

This bill would add significant bureaucracy by requiring all district and charter books, instructional aides, mandatory and optional reading materials to be pre-approved the year before school starts, even before teachers meet their students. It would eliminate teachers' ability to work with parents and specialists to assist struggling students, making it illegal for district and charter teachers to give students individually tailored support, including gifted students and special needs students. With responsive, individualized instruction often cited as a reason parents support "school choice," this bill suggests the 95% of Arizona students in district and charter schools don't warrant the same responsive teaching as their private school peers. Passed the Senate Education Committee with the sponsor promising to amend the bill to address educator concerns, but the changes made have not done so. Previously scheduled for House Education, Monday 3/16; may reappear this week.

SB 1491



Support

literacy; dyslexia; screening; appropriations

Funds dyslexia support and teacher training

Sen. Paul Boyer

This bill would implement the recommendations of the interim *(continued)*

committee which studied this issue, give schools an extra year to implement the requirements for dyslexia support and teacher training passed last year, and appropriate \$1 million in FY 2021 to fund those efforts. Awaiting House committee action.