



What's Up in the Legislature

Voice of the Poor Weekly Legislative Briefing by Tom Finnerty
(2009-April-13)

Governor Janet Napolitano gave her final **State of the State** (and farewell) message on Monday. She asked the legislature to keep funding for education and Arizona's needy a priority during this difficult budgetary time. Incoming Governor Jan Brewer will give her State of the State on Jan. 22.

After the first day, the Legislature has scheduled a week of what some are calling "**Budget Boot Camp.**"

THURSDAY (10 a.m. – noon in House Hearing Room 1) City and county administrators discuss their budget-balancing tactics, moderated by Senate president and House speaker.

THURSDAY at 2:15 p.m. the JLBC (Joint Legislative Budget Committee) will provide options for balancing the \$1.6 billion mid-year deficit to Joint House and Senate caucuses. This will be in the House Chambers. .

FRIDAY the House and Senate appropriations committee chairmen will release budget options book.

Full-day kindergarten and health insurance for working parents top a budget-cutting list that state lawmakers will consider next week to close a mid-year deficit that appears to grow worse. Incoming Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Russell Pearce, R- Mesa, said, "It's going to get bloody around here." Dropping full-day kindergarten, a policy coup for outgoing Democratic Gov. Janet Napolitano, could put legislative Republicans at odds with their new governor. Secretary of State Jan Brewer has said she supports full-day kindergarten and doesn't believe it should be cut. Sen. Rebecca Rios, D-Apache Junction, said she and other Democratic leaders recently met with Brewer and were assured the voluntary kindergarten program would be spared. "We're hearing two different messages out of the majority," said Rios, the assistant minority leader. "I think there's definitely going to be a showdown." Full-day kindergarten, phased in over five years, now costs about \$200 million annually. Lawmakers could save \$100 million if they shuttered it mid-year.

Eliminating health insurance for roughly 10,000 parents of children covered under KidsCare would save an estimated \$5 million. KidsCare has proven popular with voters, so cutting it could hurt Brewer's chances at re-election in 2010. The parents' program has been targeted for cuts during the past several years but managed to survive.

The budget options will be distributed to rank-and-file lawmakers next week. Pearce and other GOP leaders - including Brewer - have ruled out borrowing as a potential fix.

A 30-page document distributed last month by the conservative Goldwater Institute appears to be something of a **budget-cutting blueprint for Republicans**. Institute economist Byron Schломach outlined a plan to roll back spending to 2006 levels for immediate savings of \$1 billion. Both Brewer and state Treasurer Dean Martin have suggested a similar strategy. Under the plan, AHCCCS would take a \$210 million hit, the \$20 million arts endowment fund would be drained, the Department of Corrections would lose \$95 million and state aid to K-12 would be cut by \$40 million.

BILLS

The House now has 38 prefiled bills and the Senate has 63. None of the new bills affect the SVdP.

NEWS

In addition to the Irish singing the O'Obama song, the Japanese town of Obama is celebrating the inaugural. Just thought you would like to know.

Rep. Steve Gallardo (D) has resigned his seat. He will be missed.

Archives of Weekly Updates are available at <http://www.stvincentdepaul.net/VOP_WklyLegislativeUpdates.htm>