



Society of St. Vincent de Paul

## *Voice of the Poor*

**WEEKLY LEGISLATIVE REPORT for period ending 01 12 2010**

**By Tom Finnerty and Lucy Howell**

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Regular Session of the 49<sup>th</sup> Legislature opened today in joint session to hear the Governor give her State of the State presentation. *Calling on members of the legislature to act and act fast*, Governor Brewer focused on the nearly \$5 billion deficit faced by Arizona for the remaining five months in 2010 and 2011.

The governor's budget will be released on Friday. Proposed huge cuts in programs for mental health, AHCCCS, and DES have already been made public. All day Kindergarten is reported to be another budget casualty according to the AZ Republic. In her speech, the governor announced the creation of Arizona Serves linking DES with faith-based and non-profits to serve the state's needy. However, the lack of resources and impact of unprecedented demand is already a fact of life for charities.

Voters will be asked to revisit Proposition 204 (passed in 2000 expanding AHCCCS coverage to 100% of the federal poverty level or \$22,000 for a family of 4). The proposal is to roll coverage back to 33% of FPL causing thousands to lose health care coverage and the loss of millions to the state in federal matching funds. *Look for a shift back to emergency room care by thousands who will have no other option.*

Governor Brewer will try again to get one-cent temporary increase in the sales tax on the ballot: Arizona's super-majority requirement for the legislature to raise taxes has made action an impossibility. The governor has tried for over a year to get the legislature to refer the matter to the voters which requires only a simple majority. The temporary sales tax increase is supported by the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

Speaker Adams says he will hear Democratic bills with ideas to solve the budget problem and move them through the House to the Senate if they are good. The Democrats remain skeptical. *(If ever there were a time to forego partisan differences, it is NOW).* Speaker Adams also said he favors increasing revenue and stated this would not be counter to his ideas for tax breaks. It should be an interesting session.

Legislative Council has published the deadlines for the session. They, however, did not care to speculate on events after the bill deadlines.

3. January 11, 2010 - Session begins.

4. January 14, 2010 - 5:00 p.m. Seven bill introduction limitation begins in House.

5. January 18, 2010 - Last day for Senate members to submit bill requests to Legislative Council.

6. January 25, 2010 - Last day for House members to submit bill requests to Legislative Council. Legislative Council completes delivery of Senate intro sets.

7. February 1, 2010 – Last day for Senate bills to be introduced. Legislative Council completes delivery of House intro sets.

8. February 8, 2010 – Last day for House bills to be introduced.

### **Not the Budget...**

The Arizona Guardian reports that Senator Jack Harper wants to let some faculty members carry their weapons onto university and community college campuses to protect students and staff,

Harper, R-Surprise, said existing restrictions in state law keep everyone but police from legally having a gun on campuses. The problem, he said, is that those who want to harm someone else are not going to be deterred by that restriction.

### **How to reach your state legislators...**

Go to [www.azleg.gov](http://www.azleg.gov) and click on “Where Do I Find My Legislators?” Call, write or e-mail. *Now is the time to tell the stories of the working poor SVdP serves. We must be their advocates!*