

# YELLOW SHEET REPORT

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Wednesday, March 17, 2021

## NEWS NOTES AND GOSSIP

### CALLING ALL VOLUNTEERS!

Nearly three weeks after the Senate won its lawsuit to access 2.1 million ballots, the Senate still hasn't hired an auditor – and Fann is taking a different approach, planning a massive volunteer-led hand recount of ballots instead. After a railbird flagged a rumor, Fann confirmed that her new idea is to find a bipartisan team of 100 volunteers to conduct a full hand recount, hopefully at county facilities, an undertaking which she expects to take around three weeks. “We will hand count every one of them,” she said, adding that she still hopes to find a professional auditing firm to re-scan the machines, though that hasn't happened yet. The source who originally flagged the rumor described it as a ludicrous and laughable proposition that would take months and require a massive facility and an army of volunteers. Fann confirmed that she's reaching out to county recorders to find a bipartisan team to oversee the process. Former Maricopa County Recorder Helen Purcell told our reporter today that attorney Kory Langhofer, who is representing the Senate for the audit, reached out recently to ask her to be oversee the process – but that she was unclear on what kind of audit Langhofer was inviting her to oversee. “They told me they were looking for a Republican and a Democrat that was trustworthy, or that they respected or something of that nature,” she said, noting that she declined to get involved because she does not believe an audit is necessary. “They keep talking about an audit, but I don't really know what that means. I've done a ton of audits in my years and I really don't know what they're wanting to do.” Purcell said the 2020 election was “well done” and that any post-election audit from senators isn't necessary. “To be a part of something that you don't believe in I think is ridiculous,” she said. Our reporter contacted a host of other county recorders today, including former lawmaker David Stevens, but none who answered said they had been approached about the new plan. Stevens was skeptical that his fellow recorders would bite, noting they largely think the post-election audit is unnecessary.



### STEVE STILL DOESN'T TRUST THE SENATE



Steve Gallardo, the lone Democrat on the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors, said he doesn't believe the Senate has a plan for how to audit the ballots. “They're like a bunch of lost puppies who have no idea what to do,” he said, adding that he hadn't heard the latest plan about an army of volunteers, but that he doesn't trust his former colleagues to do an audit under any circumstances. “I don't think they have the capabilities to do an open, honest audit. I think their attempt is to manufacture errors. They want to make it up – they will go as far as lying to satisfy some of the Republican

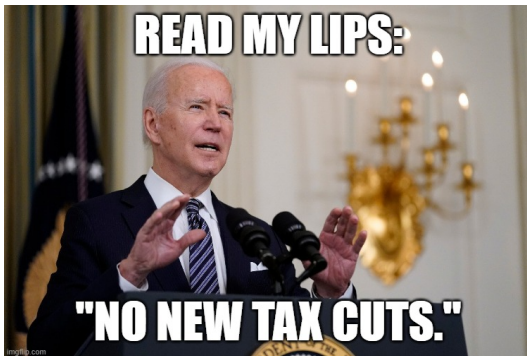
base, the Trump supporters who cannot get over the fact that they lost the 2020 election.” Gallardo said a full hand count of the county's ballots would be a “virtually impossible,” massive undertaking that would take “literally months with an army of folks” to complete. He said if that is the Senate's intent, a court-appointed special master should oversee it. “I would push to go back to court if they ever tried to say, ‘Hey, we want to try to do a 100 percent hand count,’ because again, they're not interested in the truth, they're not.” Gallardo said the Senate wouldn't want a special master to oversee such a recount because “they wouldn't be able to find the problems they're hoping to find.”

## **WE'RE RICH!**

Arizona will actually receive \$24.5 billion, not \$16.1 billion, from the latest federal Covid relief bill, according to the Joint Legislative Budget Committee. The biggest update is factoring in the direct stimulus payments to Arizona residents, who will receive up to \$1,400. Those payments represent \$8.5 billion, JLBC concluded. In other areas, state budget analysts initially assumed Arizona's share of certain funds would be 2 percent of the national dollar amount. Analysts have since seen formulas for distributing the money. For instance, the state will receive at least \$200 million more than initially expected for childcare. JLBC also published more detailed breakdowns of how much money is going directly to Arizona cities and counties. As expected, Phoenix and Maricopa County will receive the highest dollar amounts: \$416 million to Phoenix and \$870 million to Maricopa County. Tucson will get \$140 million, Mesa \$101 million and other metropolitan cities will all receive varying amounts for a total of \$975 million in direct aid. Allocations to smaller cities will range from less than \$500,000 to \$21 million, totaling \$258 million. And Arizona counties will receive a total of \$2.6 billion.



## **AND WE'RE PROBABLY STAYING RICH**



However, that federal funding for states comes with significant strings attached – it cannot be used to pay down pension debt or “reduce taxes directly or indirectly.” That could mean trouble for Republicans’ desire to enact as much as \$1 billion in tax cuts over the next three years. Still, it’s not exactly clear what this tax cut prohibition means for the states. Under one reading, the federal language doesn’t necessarily bar Arizona from enacting tax cuts so long as the state can show – if audited later – that the tax cuts are independent of the federal aid. For example, the feds theoretically would not object to a reduction in state revenue

arising from a tax cut if a reduction in expenses also accompanied it. In that case, the federal funding does not serve to supplant what’s already budgeted for in state spending. However, if expenses remained the same (or increased) even as state revenue declined, then the feds would theoretically have a reason to argue that Arizona is using the federal aid as direct offsets. Brnovich and a host of other Republicans attorneys general fired off a letter to the US Treasury secretary asking her to “confirm that certain provisions of the American Rescue Plan Act do not attempt to strip States of their core sovereign authority to enact and implement basic tax policy.” “The import of the Act’s prohibition against “offsetting” reductions in state tax revenue is unclear, but potentially breathtaking,” they wrote, calling the broader interpretation of the provision an “unconstitutional intrusion on the separate sovereignty,” they wrote. States, of course, are free to turn down the federal money and slash taxes as much as they like, but the AGs wrote, “it is difficult to envision many, if any, turning down this support for their citizens.” Brnovich offered two semi-hypotheticals to make the point, noting voters approved Prop 208 at the ballot last year, and lawmakers are trying to “provide an alternative tax structure for small businesses—again having nothing to do with COVID-19 or the federal funds.” He also noted that Arizona is phasing out law-enforcement fees on vehicle registration renewals, which has nothing to do with the pandemic.

## **BUT IF YOU DON'T PASS IT, YOU'LL NEVER KNOW WHAT'S IN IT**

Fann told our reporter she is going to sit on Ducey's priority sports betting bills until senators can learn more about what the bills will do and how they would impact the gaming compact negotiations. "Members just needed more time to understand ... we were not a part of the negotiations so we have had to slow the process down," she said. Anni Foster, Ducey's general counsel, said in committee on Shope's S1797 (fantasy sports betting; event wagering) that the Governor's Office met with roughly nine lawmakers about the compact. (Borrelli said he was one of those nine, as were other members of House and Senate leadership.) Fann said that was mostly true and added that Ducey's Office said their door would be open for anybody who had questions. "With all the Covid restrictions and full schedules it's just taking time for everyone to feel knowledgeable," Fann told our reporter. "The bills refer to the compacts. Our members not only have to understand the bills, but also what was in the compacts. We do not want to get in the position of 'you have to pass it to know what's in it.'"



## **CROSS THE BORDER, DOUG, MEXICO IS LOVELY**



Ducey is visiting the border on Friday to see the situation on the ground due to what he said is a crisis caused by the Biden administration. In a closed event limited to just two news outlets, the Ninth Floor invited our reporter and *12 News* to watch Ducey sign H2459 (manslaughter; suicide assistance; violation) and give remarks about the legislation, and Ducey stayed to answer a few unrelated questions after the bill signing. Yesterday was the three-month anniversary since Ducey held his last full press briefing, but Karamargin said that could change soon, though he wouldn't provide any details. Ducey danced around questions about the budget negotiations, Covid relief and the details of his trip to the border, but he was quick to take a shot at

Biden. "This is a crisis, and it looks like a crisis of the Biden White House administration and their policies," he said. He noted he has worked well with the president on vaccines, but on border security not so much. Karamargin said some lawmakers will be joining Ducey at the border, but would not say which lawmakers.

## **DEMOCRATS NEVER BLAME DEMOCRATS**

Democrats balked at the IRC's choice of Brian Schmitt, the chief of staff to Phoenix City Councilman Jim Waring, as its executive director yesterday, though Democratic commissioners had a chance to stop his appointment. After an eight-hour day filled with meetings behind closed doors, commissioners chose Schmitt in a 3-2 vote with the chair Erika Neuberg joining the two Republican commissioners. The National Democratic Redistricting Committee said in a press release that the Republican operative should not have won the slot, and that the partisan vote should be a red flag. "This is the first time in the history of Arizona's redistricting commission – three previous Executive Director hires – that the Executive Director selection was not a unanimous vote," the group said. (There have only been two other redistricting cycles.) Democrats actually had an opportunity to select one of their own, but Dem Commissioner Derrick Watchman only voted for Kristina Gomez instead of Keely Hartsell, who had two other votes already. Had he voted yes on Hartsell there would have been another round of voting between her and Schmitt, likely forcing Neuberg to pick the Dem choice or the Republican choice. Leading up to the decision, commissioners met in executive session where the commissioners likely hashed out their partisan differences and discussed which candidates they liked most. Based on open meeting discussion and interviews, it did not seem like Schmitt was the top choice, but the public won't know how those conversations behind closed doors went. Since her selection as the independent chair, Neuberg has touted

that she wants transparency with the public, but when faced with the most important decision to date, everything happened outside of the public's purview. State law also permits candidate names and full applications to remain outside of public record, instead only releasing the names of finalists and their redacted resumes to be viewed. Our reporter requested the full applications for all 43 candidates who applied to the executive director position, but instead only received the five names of those who interviewed and the professional resumes. One piece of information that was not included in Schmitt's resume was a brief consulting gig he had with McSally at the end of her 2020 campaign, for which he earned \$63,000. Commissioners asked him to explain the consulting gig in his second interview, after our reporter tweeted about it ([LINK](#)). He chalked it up as "kind of a one-off," and said his resume only lists his previous full-time employment. He said he worked for McSally as a favor to a friend. Democratic leaders in the Legislature didn't buy that excuse. "Such a large payment for something as minor as 'logistics' for a Republican candidate is alarming and needs to be independently investigated," Rios and Bolding said in a joint statement today. "This type of campaign work, and the candidate's decision to initially withhold that critical information from his application, should have been immediately disqualifying."

## •WAKE UP CALL•

### **Former Nogales mayor announces bid for governor**

*Capitol Media Services*

Former Nogales Mayor Marco Lopez launched his bid for governor with a request to "join us" — and a highly partisan jab at Republicans.

### **House panel advances bill to restrict short-term rentals**

*Capitol Media Services*

Rejecting claims the measure amounts to little more than window dressing, a House panel voted Tuesday to give local governments more power to regulate short-term vacation rentals. But just a bit.

### **Senate panel moves to block private funds for elections**

*Capitol Media Services*

Raising the specter of Mark Zuckerberg influencing who holds office in Arizona, Republican lawmakers moved Monday to block counties from taking money from any private source to help run future elections.

### **Arizona bill a "baby step" toward more local power over short-term rentals**

*Capitol Media Services*

Rejecting claims the measure amounts to little more than window dressing, a House panel voted Tuesday to give local governments more power to regulate short-term vacation rentals.

### **Arizona families to benefit from \$1.4 billion to help with food, child care**

*Arizona Daily Star*

Over half a million Arizona children whose families are receiving food assistance will soon get additional funding to help offset pandemic hardships.

### **Arizona National Guard busier than ever**

*East Valley Tribune*

The three hikers stranded in snow near Sedona were in a tight spot. After days of sub-freezing temperatures stuck in a rock crevice without food, they were showing signs of frostbite.

### **Where to Get a Volunteer Shot, Plus More Arizona COVID News**

*Phoenix New Times*

It's Tuesday, March 16. More than 833,000 Arizonans have contracted COVID-19 and more than 16,500 have died as a result.



**New Facilities Opening in Arizona to Process Influx of Migrants***Phoenix New Times*

The federal government will construct new facilities in Arizona to handle the recent spike in migrants arriving at the U.S.-Mexico border, the country's chief immigration official said.

**Border Patrol Routinely Deports Migrants to Nogales, Mexico, in the Dead of Night***Phoenix New Times*

U.S. Customs and Border Protection officials frequently deport migrants to Nogales, Mexico, in the middle of the night — a practice that immigration advocates say endangers migrants and leaves them vulnerable to exploitation.

**Here's what Ducey left out of his pitch to Californians***Arizona Mirror (Opinion, Reginald Walton)*

In a recent opinion piece published in a Southern California newspaper, Gov. Doug Ducey welcomed Californians moving to Arizona, citing the “burdensome policies that are driving businesses away” from the Golden State.

**Biden's border bungle won't play well for Sen. Mark Kelly***Arizona Republic (Opinion, Laurie Roberts)*

The crisis at the border could be the Republicans' best shot at retaking control of Congress. Democratic Sen. Mark Kelly, who must stand for re-election next year, could be in for a rough ride.

**Arizona Legislature can (and should) override regulators on clean energy mandates***Arizona Republic (Opinion, Robert Robb)*

The Arizona Legislature, not the Corporation Commission, has the final say on clean energy requirements. Lawmakers should make that clear.

**Mark Brnovich's transformation from independent Arizona AG to partisan hack is complete***Arizona Republic (Opinion, Elvia Diaz)*

I once called Mark Brnovich the ‘legal moral conscience of Arizona.’ But his political ambitions have turned him into just another partisan hack.

**Atlanta spa shootings are a reminder: We can't be silent about violence against Asians***Arizona Republic (Opinion, Elvia Diaz)*

A gunman killed eight people at Atlanta-area spas, including six Asians, prompting an urgent call to stop the hate. We all must call it out.

**One simple prison policy change could have the economic impact of 30 high-tech factories***Arizona Republic (Op-ed, Jim Rounds and Elissa Johnson)*

Expanding early release credits would safely reduce the prison population, better prepare inmates for life after prison and save Arizona a ton of cash.

**·PRESS RELEASES·****CDC report gives Arizona high marks for COVID-19 vaccination in areas with high social vulnerability***Arizona ranks third nationally for vaccinating vulnerable populations*

**PHOENIX** — A new report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) ranks Arizona among the best states in the nation for getting the COVID-19 vaccine to vulnerable communities.

The CDC report out today found that Arizona had the third-highest vaccination coverage for high-vulnerability counties as determined by the Social Vulnerability Index (SVI), a nationally accepted framework. The index uses 15 indicators, including metrics for socioeconomic status, age and disability status, minority status and language, and housing type and transportation access, to assess the social vulnerability of counties in the U.S.

Arizona is one of only two states that had greater COVID-19 vaccination coverage in its counties with high social vulnerability than its counties with low social vulnerability across all metrics, according to the index. In all other

states, COVID-19 vaccination coverage was lower in their counties with high social vulnerability compared to their counties with low social vulnerability.

“This finding by the CDC demonstrates the value of the hard work by the Arizona Department of Health Services, counties, and healthcare workers to distribute Arizona’s limited supply of COVID-19 vaccine not only rapidly but equitably,” said Governor Doug Ducey. “From strategic use of planning tools to direct outreach in English and Spanish to closely monitoring data, Arizona has laid a strong foundation to break down barriers to the COVID-19 vaccine among our most vulnerable residents. We will continue to build on this success in the weeks and months ahead.”

“COVID-19 has had a more significant impact among racial and ethnic minority groups as well as those who are socially and economically disadvantaged,” said Dr. Cara Christ, director of the Arizona Department of Health Services. “It’s gratifying to see Arizona’s prominent mention and high national ranking in the CDC’s report, but we know there is much more work ahead with 6 million Arizonans who still need to be vaccinated.”

As of this morning, 2,646,874 doses of COVID-19 vaccine had been administered to 1,663,876 individuals in Arizona, including 1,033,008 who have been fully vaccinated.

In order to reach more high risk Arizonans and get them vaccinated, ADHS and partners recently conducted a pilot program in ZIP code 85009, just west of downtown Phoenix. This highly targeted campaign, focusing on an area with higher COVID-19 cases and lower vaccination rates than many others, is part of a multi-pronged effort through which ADHS is engaging underserved populations directly and through partners including county health departments. This targeted outreach in ZIP code 85009 included several telephone town halls in English and Spanish, targeted use of social media in English and Spanish, and hundreds of yard signs promoting vaccination and wearing masks. Interaction with community leaders has also led to a collaboration that got more than 400 of the area’s residents 65 and older to vaccination appointments by actively registering and providing transportation to and from the site. Next up is a plan to expand this approach into underserved neighborhoods in areas of southwest and south Phoenix and Yuma County while looking to reach even more of Arizona.

Local health departments have been working to reach communities impacted by COVID-19 and increase vaccine uptake. For example, Maricopa County Department of Public Health is coordinating with community organizations to put community-based vaccine sites directly in high-risk communities. The Pima County Health Department, partnering with local community based organizations and faith-based leaders, has been providing mobile vaccination opportunities to those most in need. Yuma County Public Health Services District has been administering COVID-19 vaccine to vulnerable communities through community based pop-up vaccination clinics in partnership with cities and providing employer-based vaccination opportunities for agricultural companies.

ADHS offers a bilingual COVID-19 Vaccine Navigation Help Desk at 844.542.8011 for those needing extra assistance with registration and answers to questions. When about 50,000 appointments were made available on Tuesday, March 2, at State Farm Stadium and Phoenix Municipal Stadium, the help desk handled 1,562 calls from Spanish speakers.

The agency continues to add information and resources in Spanish, including the online scheduling tool at [podvaccine.azdhs.gov](https://podvaccine.azdhs.gov).

Information about all vaccination sites across Arizona can be found at [azhealth.gov/findvaccine](https://azhealth.gov/findvaccine). Those without computer access or needing extra help registering can call 1-844-542-8201 to be connected with someone who can assist. **Note: You can use the patient portal at [podvaccine.azdhs.gov](https://podvaccine.azdhs.gov) to make an appointment for a relative in a prioritized group.**

To learn more about COVID-19 vaccines and vaccination, please visit [azdhs.gov/COVID19Vaccines](https://azdhs.gov/COVID19Vaccines).

The CDC report on county-level COVID-19 vaccination coverage and social vulnerability is in the March 17 edition of the agency’s Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, which can be reviewed [here](#).

## Former CEO of Goodyear Charter School Sentenced to 4 Years in Prison

**GOODYEAR** – Attorney General Mark Brnovich announced that Daniel K. Hughes, former CEO of the defunct Bradley Academy of Excellence, was sentenced to four years in prison and ordered to pay restitution for his role in the theft of over \$2.6 million from the Arizona Department of Education, the U.S. Dept. of Education, the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, and the Federal Communications Commission.

Bradley Academy (also known as the Discovery Creemos Academy and Bradley Creemos Academy) was a charter school in Goodyear that abruptly closed its doors in January 2018. It was then discovered that the school had falsified its attendance records, and Hughes was the architect of a scheme reporting fake students, called “caspers,” to the Arizona Department of Education to increase funding. Hughes and accomplices, Principal Harold Cadiz and Vice

Principal Joanna Vega, reported 191 caspers during the 2016-2017 academic year and 453 caspers during the 2017-2018 academic year. This resulted in more than two million dollars in overpayments for those years.

[Hughes pleaded guilty](#) to one count of Conspiracy and one count of Theft. A Maricopa County Superior Court Judge sentenced him on March 12, 2021. After release from prison, Hughes will be placed on supervised probation for five years.

Hughes' accomplices both pleaded guilty and were sentenced in 2020. [Cadiz](#) was sentenced to 3.75 years in prison, followed by 5 years of supervised probation with white-collar terms. [Vega](#) was sentenced to four months of jail and 5 years of supervised probation with white-collar terms. All three defendants are ordered to pay \$2,538,722 together in restitution.

Assistant Attorney General Mary Harriss prosecuted the case.

## Governor Ducey Signs Legislation To Protect Minors Facing Mental Health Issues

PHOENIX — Governor Doug Ducey today signed legislation to protect young Arizonans experiencing suicidal thoughts by allowing a manslaughter charge if an adult provides guidance that a minor uses to take their life.

The Governor signed the bill in the presence of Paolla Jordan, whose son committed suicide two years ago, and Representative Jeff Weninger.

"Protecting Arizona families is our number one priority — and while there's always more work to be done, this is a step in the right direction," said Governor Ducey. "Thank you, Paolla, for sharing your story. You created this change, and it wouldn't have happened without your dedication to protecting other families. And thank you, Representative Weninger, for leading on this important legislation."

Watch the video [HERE](#).

Representative Weninger, a champion for mental health support and protection, sponsored House Bill (HB) 2459.

"Our hearts are with Paolla, her family and all Arizonans who have suffered the loss of a loved one to suicide," said Representative Weninger. "HB2459 penalizes individuals who encourage minors in a vulnerable state, and it will help protect young Arizonans and their families. I was honored to work on this legislation with Paolla and offer support to those facing difficulties with mental health."

The legislation is in honor of Adrio Romine, a 17-year-old who tragically took his life after an adult on the internet encouraged and advised him. Adrio's mother, Paolla Jordan, shortly after his death learned the individual gave her son specific instructions on how to end his life — but no law was broken at the time. Paolla pushed legislation to change that, resulting in the development of HB2459.

"I hope that no other parent has to go through what our family experienced," said Paolla. "There are dangerous people out there that can prey on our children on the internet. Today there is a consequence for a predator's actions. This law will help protect our children today. I was proud to work with Representative Weninger on getting HB2459 Laloboy Act through the finish line, and I am grateful to everyone working to protect children facing suicidal thoughts."

Today's signing follows the state's continued work to protect those facing mental health issues and suicidal ideation. On March 3, 2020, Governor Ducey signed legislation requiring health care insurers to cover mental health without additional barriers — just like they would cover an annual physical. The legislation, SB1523, was introduced by Senator Kate Brophy McGee and Representative Weninger.

On September 11, 2019, Governor Ducey signed legislation introduced by Senator Sean Bowie to expand suicide awareness and prevention training in Arizona's public schools.

The Governor issued a proclamation recognizing September 6 – 12, 2020 to be Suicide Prevention Awareness Week in Arizona to raise awareness of the issue of suicide and highlight services available for those in need.

Additionally, Governor Ducey on September 10, 2020 joined health and education leaders, veterans advocates and state lawmakers today to raise awareness, highlight support and resources available, describe state actions to help those dealing with depression and other mental health issues amid the pandemic.

## Honest Arizona Board Members Outline New Priorities to Hold Officials Accountable During the COVID Crisis

PHOENIX — Honest Arizona advisory board members published an [open letter](#) this week outlining new priorities to hold elected officials accountable during the COVID-19 pandemic. The letter praised U.S. Senators Kyrsten Sinema and Mark Kelly for their votes to pass the American Rescue Plan, much-needed COVID relief:

*"We are grateful to U.S. Sens. Kyrsten Sinema and Mark Kelly for wasting no time and working in Washington D.C. to address the serious concerns of Arizonans who have struggled throughout this pandemic.*

*"Kelly made the economic rescue of Arizona's families and small businesses a top priority, fighting for \$50 billion in grants and loans for small businesses to stay afloat and keep people employed. Additionally, we thank the Biden administration and the members of the Arizona congressional delegation who are working to ensure that Arizonans can recover from this crisis as quickly as possible. But this rescue plan can only be the beginning.*

*"We are joining Honest Arizona to hold our elected leaders accountable. Arizonans have endured far too much this past year, and we continue to face serious problems. If we're going to get past this pandemic and get Arizona working families the opportunities they need, our leaders must be honest and transparent, follow the advice of public health experts, and respond to the needs of their constituents."*

Honest Arizona is running English- and Spanish-language ads statewide in support of the American Rescue Plan and Senator Mark Kelly's vote to bring relief to Arizona's small businesses and keep Arizonans employed.

### **Brnovich Thanked for Co-Leading Letter to U.S. Treasury Secretary**

*States should not be denied their sovereignty through the American Rescue Plan Act*

**PHOENIX, March 17, 2021**—The state's leading small-business association today thanked Arizona Attorney General Mark Brnovich for joining 20 other state attorneys general in co-leading a letter to U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen asking her for a sensible interpretation of a key provision in the American Rescue Plan Act that, if read one way, could deny states their ability to make changes their tax systems.

"We have been working on badly needed property and income tax reform long before the American Rescue Plan Act was a flicker of thought in anyone's mind," said Chad Heinrich, Arizona state director for the National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB), the nation's leading small-business association. "States are marketplaces and Arizona continually seeks to maintain a tax environment that is competitive with other states in our region, just as every state does for itself. We thank Attorney General Brnovich for seeking clarity from the federal government on whether or not the money our state will receive from the American Rescue Plan Act would prohibit the State of Arizona from proceeding on state policy issues fundamental to our own basic sovereign rights."

### **Legislative Democrats' Statement on Arizona IRC Choosing Republican Operative Brian Schmitt as Executive Director**

*PHOENIX— Arizona Senate Democratic Leader Rebecca Rios and House Democratic Leader Reginald Bolding released the following statement today after the Arizona Independent Redistricting Commission selected Republican operative Brian Schmitt as the Executive Director.*

"It's deeply dismaying that the Arizona Independent Redistricting Commission voted 3-2 to offer the critical role of Executive Director to Brian Schmitt, a Republican operative who failed to disclose to the commission recent, relevant and partisan campaign work. Schmitt's name is linked to a 2020 campaign disbursement from Martha McSally for Congress in the amount of \$63,652.44, made three days after the November election, as well as disbursements from the Republican National Committee in 2020 and 2018. This type of campaign work, and the candidate's decision to initially withhold that critical information from his application, should have been immediately disqualifying. Schmitt, chief of staff to Republican Phoenix City Councilman Jim Waring, tried to downplay this five-figure payment from McSally by saying, 'a friend called and asked me to help with logistics, that was my only involvement.' Such a large payment for something as minor as 'logistics' for a Republican candidate is alarming and needs to be independently investigated. The Independent Redistricting Commission must be seen as exactly that --independent. This selection – the first in the Commission's history where the selection was not unanimous – risks losing the public's confidence and trust in the Commission to redraw Arizona's congressional and legislative districts fairly and transparently. The Commission's work is too important to every Arizonan to take this risk."

### **NDRC Condemns AZ Redistricting Commission Offering Executive Director To Career GOP Operative**

*We Call on Chair Neuberg to Recommit to an Impartial & Independent Commission*



Yesterday, **Arizona's Independent Redistricting Commission (IRC)** voted 3-2 to offer the job of **Executive Director to Brian Schmitt, who has worked as a Republican operative for his entire career.** Schmitt has spent the last decade as Chief of Staff for conservative Phoenix City Council Member Jim Waring. He is also listed on expense reports from the Republican National Committee in 2020 and 2018. **This is the first time in the history of Arizona's redistricting commission – three previous Executive Director hires – that the Executive Director selection was not a unanimous vote.**

"If the IRC wants a truly independent and impartial redistricting process, they should not select the most partisan applicant to serve as the executive director. **We call on Chair Neuberg and the Arizona commissioners to recommit to consensus building and for all future Commission hires to not have overtly partisan backgrounds,"** said NDRC States Press Secretary Molly Mitchell.

"The Commission should be working to hire diverse and qualified staff, and yesterday's decision is a concerning step toward having the Commission be influenced by partisan officials," **continued Mitchell.**

## “QUOTE OF THE DAY”

**“We will hand count every one of them.”**

***- Fann, on her new plan to have an bipartisan army of volunteers conduct a hand recount of Maricopa County ballots***