



Legislators will kick off a new legislative session on January 12, and they have already introduced more than 200 proposals for consideration in the next few months. Policy discussions will unfold in a climate that is even more political than usual due to the high-stakes elections that will take place this fall.

Voters will decide the outcome in races for Governor and other statewide offices, as well as all 90 legislative seats. Republicans are determined to [expand their influence](#) and their political successes in the legislature; Democrats plan to [invest millions](#) to enhance their success in statewide and [competitive legislative districts](#).

The focus on 2026 elections will influence relationships and votes, and will impact every decision throughout the legislative session.

The dynamics of this legislative session will also be shaped by:

- **Ballot Measures:** Lawmakers expect to send many proposals directly to voters this year, as they seek to amend the state constitution or avoid the Governor’s veto pen. Proposed ballot measures already include changes to [early voting](#), [increased legislative pay](#) and abbreviated [legislative sessions](#), and limits on [school policies related to gender](#).
- **Budget Difficulties:** Arizona policymakers face an unusually difficult budget situation as they prepare for the next fiscal year, and every policy decision will be considered in the context of ongoing questions about state finances. [Economic uncertainties](#) have [reduced state tax revenues](#), but it is federal funding cuts that will cause [the most significant changes](#) to state finances and [healthcare resources](#). Lawmakers will have to balance decreased dollars with [many demands](#) for state programs and priorities, while also trying to protect funding they previously assigned to [specific priorities](#).
- **Ethics Charges:** Since the end of the 2025 legislative session, lawmakers have repeatedly accused each other of violating ethics standards. The House Ethics Committee Chair [quickly dismissed a complaint](#) about social media posts from Representative John Gillette (R-Kingman) last summer, but [a charge](#) against Senator Analise Ortiz (D-Phoenix) for her announcements about ICE activities was referred to the U.S. Attorney’s Office. As political disputes escalate into personal accusations, legislative Ethics Committees will continue to play a key role in evaluating the charges and the politics associated with them.

- **Intraparty Disputes:** The last session concluded with [sharp divides](#) and a [leadership shift](#) for legislative Republicans, and some of those fractures will continue to influence policy conversations. Legislative Democrats still have internal feuding, as well, due to [divergent ideas](#) of what their party's focus should be.
- **Turnover:** Some current lawmakers are running for higher office, and others will not seek reelection. The session could also bring [notable changes](#) to legislative leadership. As they prepare to wrap up their time at the Capitol, many lawmakers will be more focused than ever on enacting their policy goals.

Lawmakers will introduce hundreds of proposals in the next few weeks, including bills related to these high-profile policy areas:

- **Abortion**

Though the fight over major state abortion laws is [unfolding in the courts](#), legislative Republicans will renew their efforts to limit abortions through enhanced [reporting](#) and [communication standards](#) and a new tax deduction for [adoption of embryos](#). Governor Hobbs is expected to veto any proposal that seeks to reduce access to abortions.

- **Affordability**

This will be a buzzword echoing across many policy areas this year, as [both political parties](#) seek to frame their priorities in the context of what will make things less costly for Arizonans.

- **Criminal Justice**

Lawmakers want to amend many sections of Arizona laws on crime and punishment, and plan to propose changes to [sex offender oversight](#), [destruction of weapons](#) used to commit a crime, and funding for the new [Independent Correctional Oversight Office](#).

- **Education**

There are many demands for education funding across the state, but a top priority will be the effort to ask voters to [extend Proposition 123](#) – the funding mechanism that provides approximately \$300 million for education programs each year. Without its extension, those programs would become reliant on other state budget resources.

The debate about Empowerment Scholarship Accounts (ESAs) will also continue. Republicans have pledged to [protect expanded access](#) to ESAs; Democrats will continue their objections to the [use and accountability of ESAs](#).

Lawmakers will also consider proposals that would enact requirements for [classroom curriculum](#) and require broad changes to [school oversight](#) and [school officials' responsibilities](#).

- **Elections**

Many bills will focus on elections again this year, and policymakers must decide whether to permanently move up [Primary Election timelines](#). Democrats hope to make it easier to [register to vote](#); Republicans seek changes to the process of [elections, early voting](#), and [ballot certification](#), as well as additional legislative oversight of the [Elections Procedures Manual](#).

- **Healthcare**

Many discussions about healthcare programs will take place in budget negotiations, but lawmakers will also seek to change healthcare policies. The Senate will again attempt to require hospitals to report on the [immigration status of patients](#) who are insured by the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS), and lawmakers from both political parties will seek solutions to Arizona's medical workforce shortages – especially in rural areas of the state.

Some Republicans hope to reduce Arizona's immunization standards for [infants](#), schools, and [workplaces](#), ban all [mask and vaccine mandates](#), and [eliminate fluoride](#) in public water systems. Republicans will also seek to add new limits on [what foods may be purchased](#) through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and alter [insurance coverage](#) and [professional liabilities](#) for gender-related treatments. Other lawmakers hope to focus on new resources for [child development programs](#) and broader [workplace heat protections](#).

- **Housing**

Bipartisan focus on affordable housing continues, but [so does disagreement](#) between those who seek statewide policies and those who want to prioritize local control over zoning and housing standards. Legislators will consider proposals on [rent control](#), low-income housing [tax credits](#), and limits on [short-term rentals](#).

- **Public Safety**

Lawmakers want to make Arizona's schools safer, but are [unlikely to agree on the details](#) of how to best achieve that goal. Republicans want to [expand gun rights](#) and Democrats want to add limits to gun access; both efforts are unlikely to successfully pass the legislature and earn the Governor's signature. Much of the public safety debate is expected to center on border security and what the state's role should be in enforcing immigration laws.

- **Tax Cuts**

Tax cuts will be a bipartisan priority this year: Governor Hobbs has [called on the legislature](#) to cut state taxes to align with the federal government’s recent tax cuts, but [Republicans say](#) she just took credit for Republican tax policies and they plan to introduce their own plan to cut taxes.

- **Water & Natural Resources**

Lawmakers on both sides of the aisle are focused on water resources and management, especially as the debate over access to [diminishing Colorado River water](#) continues, but they do not agree on the policies required to address the challenges. The Governor’s efforts to implement water management decisions without legislative approval have led to [legal challenges](#). Legislators will consider many water-related proposals this year, but only a fraction of those ideas will earn the necessary support from the Governor and key Republican lawmakers. Lawmakers will also seek changes to policies on energy and the environment – including bills on [fuel formulations](#) and [air quality factors](#), and the Residential Utility Consumer Office’s involvement in [public service rate-setting](#).

[Click here](#) to see the bills filed for the 2026 legislative session and [here](#) for weekly schedules of legislative committees and floor sessions.