



AZ Common Sense Newsletter

2-16-2026

[Open In Browser](#)

Nº2

THE PEORIA MAYORAL RACE IS POISED TO INFLUENCE ARIZONA'S FUTURE



Peoria, Arizona, is a rapidly growing Phoenix metro city with vast undeveloped land—especially the **Peoria Innovation Core**—poised to create high-quality jobs in tech, manufacturing, and semiconductors while preserving quality of life and strong infrastructure.

The **2026 mayoral race** is critically important with **Mayor Jason Beck** announcing his retirement, as the next leader will shape land use, economic partnerships, job growth, and sustainable development during this transformative era.

Current Candidates for Mayor

Based on the official City of Peoria Clerk's Office election information as of early February 2026:

- **Michael Finn:** Current Peoria City Councilmember, former Mayor Pro Tem and current Vice Mayor. He announced his withdrawal shortly after Beck's announcement. Finn has over a decade on council, business experience including as CFO for Peoria Unified School

District, and focuses on fiscal responsibility, safe neighborhoods, thriving economy, and completing projects like the Innovation Core.

- **Art Miller:** Former Peoria Police Chief. He brings extensive public safety experience, a focus on transparency, community collaboration, and ideas for smart city management to his campaign for a safer, more vibrant Peoria. He has an active public service background, with community mentions of his run including petition drives and local engagements.

The race appears to be primarily between **Art Miller** and **Michael Finn** at this stage as other candidates have either dropped or have not completed their filings.

If no more than two candidates file for mayor, the primary may be dispensed with per city charter.

WHO ARE MY ELECTED OFFICIALS?



[Check here to find out.](#)

UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL-FEB 28 SAVE THE DATE



The **West Valley Republican & Independent Coalition** invites you to a **“Meet The Candidates”** event **Sat Feb 28, 2026**, from **10:00 AM – 2:00 PM** at 10147 Grand Ave, Sun City.

Arizona State and local candidates have been invited to attend and make their presentations to **YOU, THE VOTERS**.

To date, many Republican candidates that are running for State Attorney General, Treasurer, Superintendent of Schools, Corporation Commission and West Valley legislative districts will be in attendance.

They will each have 10-15 minutes to speak.

This is a great opportunity for you to hear directly from the candidates and ask questions on their positions and platforms so that we can make informed endorsements as the primary season unfolds.

Door prizes, raffles, and political merch! Drinks and snacks will be provided. A food truck will also be available.

BREAKING NEWS - OUR AZ PRIMARIES WILL NOW HAPPEN IN JULY

Arizona Primary Election Date Change
Tuesday, August 4 → Tuesday, July 21, 2026



Old Primary Date



New Primary Date

The Arizona primary election dates have been moved from the first Tuesday in August (August 4, 2026) to the second-to-last Tuesday in July (July 21, 2026) for 2026 and permanently thereafter due to a new bipartisan law, HB 2022, signed on February 6, 2026.

The primary reason for this change is to provide election officials with additional time to meet federal requirements under the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA), ensuring military and overseas voters receive their general election ballots at least 45 days in advance—even if primary results are delayed by recounts or other processes—thus avoiding potential disenfranchisement.

For official confirmation from the Arizona Secretary of State's office, see the February 6, 2026 statement outlining the updated timeline following the bill's passage: <https://azsos.gov/news/1015>.

ESA's REIGN ACROSS THE AZ POLITICAL SPECTRUM



Arizona's Empowerment Scholarship Account (ESA) program, its flagship universal school choice initiative, has surpassed ****100,000 enrolled students**** as of late January 2026

This marks a dramatic ~10x growth since the 2022 universal expansion, when enrollment was around 11,000–12,000, making Arizona's **ESA** one of only five nationwide programs to hit this scale, joining Florida, Ohio, and North Carolina.

Polling from the Center for Arizona Policy shows strong support: 80% of parents and 67% of registered voters back the program.

Proponents, including Superintendent Tom Horne, hail it as proof of parental demand, empowering families with options like private schools, homeschooling, tutoring, and curricula—a "remarkable endorsement" of school choice amid National School Choice Week.

Governor Katie Hobbs opposes it, calling it a wasteful, unaccountable entitlement that diverts funds from public schools and contributes to closures.

The Majority Legislature has blocked Hobb's reform proposals that seek to erode this popular program.

Debates continue over costs, now exceeding \$1 billion annually, accountability, and potential reforms but the enrollment surge signals strong momentum for parental education options in Arizona.

HIDDEN COSTS OF AZ's DATA CENTER BOOM: PROTECTING FAMILY AFFORDABILITY



Arizona's explosive data center growth is fueling the AI surge, but without measures to make these facilities cover their own costs, families face higher energy bills that strain household budgets in our high-cost state.

Rising Costs Passed to Families - APS has filed for a 14% rate increase in 2025, potentially adding \$20/month to typical household bills starting late 2026. Proposals feature steeper hikes of up to 45% for data centers and separate customer classes for fairer cost allocation, but shortfalls could raise residential rates. Even small increases add hundreds yearly, forcing cuts to groceries, medical care, or AC use in extreme heat—hitting tight budgets hardest in our desert climate.

Rapid Growth and Energy Strain-Phoenix is now a prime data center hub, driving massive electricity demand. Data centers could reach 16% of Arizona's total power by 2030, per Electric Power Research Institute reports. Each large facility matches the consumption of tens of thousands of homes, necessitating billions in new generation, transmission, and grid upgrades to prevent outages during heat waves and population growth.

Threat to Strained Water Supplies-Phoenix-area centers consume hundreds of millions of gallons yearly for cooling, with projections of a nearly 900% surge—from ~385 million to over 3.7 billion gallons annually if all planned facilities are built. Combined with power-generation needs, this

could increase water stress by up to 32% in basins reliant on the dwindling Colorado River and groundwater. While some use reclaimed water or low-evaporative tech, unchecked expansion risks deepening shortages that already limit housing and household supply, forcing stricter conservation and higher costs on Arizona families in our arid region.

So that residents do not bear the brunt of subsidizing data centers' power needs:

- Support ending tax exemptions: Back proposals to recover \$38M+ annually and eliminate corporate handouts.
- Advocate for cost allocation: Urge ACC rules requiring data centers to cover grid upgrades upfront via contracts or collateral—no shifting to household ratepayers.
- Promote self-generation: Require on-site renewables, batteries, or other solutions to lessen grid burden.
- Vote for accountability: Choose leaders prioritizing ratepayer protection over unchecked incentives.
- Engage in rate cases: Submit ACC comments for separate/higher data center rates.
- Join advocacy groups.

If you want make your voice heard in this debate contact your commissioners via email at UtilitiesDiv@azcc.gov.

Arizona's data center boom offers potential if handled responsibly so that Arizona can make economic gains without hidden costs to utilities or household users.....Stay informed and contact legislators to ensure fair policies.

THANKS A LOT, CALIFORNIA



Arizona voters, buckle up—because your wallet is about to feel the pain at the pump, and a big part of the blame lands squarely on California's policies and decisions.

Arizona has no oil refineries of its own, relying heavily on imported gasoline—about one-third from California refineries producing a special West Coast

blend. Disruptions there directly hit Arizona.

How Are California's Policies Hitting Your Pocketbook?

Massive Refinery Closures in California-Citing the high cost of doing business and overregulation, Phillips 66's Wilmington refinery shut down by end of 2025, and Valero's Benicia refinery began phasing out in early 2026. These remove 17% of California's gasoline refining capacity, tightening exports to Arizona and risking shortages during peak summer demand.

Ripple Effects on Supply and Prices-Analysts warn of higher regional prices and volatility. Arizona competes for scarcer supply, with historical disruptions causing immediate spikes e.g., 50-95 cents overnight. Projections suggest sustained increases while national prices trend lower.

Stringent Regulations and "Hidden Taxes"-California's tightening rules—like Low Carbon Fuel Standard updates adding 47-65+ cents/gallon starting 2025—plus high taxes, cap-and-trade, and fees pressure refiners to exit, worsening the supply crunch.

Current Situation-As of early February 2026, Arizona's average gas price is ~\$3.08-\$3.14/gallon, above the national average ~\$2.90-\$2.94, with recent upticks. California's green policies reduce emissions but export higher fuel costs to Arizona families, commuters, and businesses due to our dependence.

It's time to demand energy independence—whether through new pipelines from other regions, local solutions, or pressuring for balanced policies that don't punish neighboring states.

Until then, when you fill up and see those rising numbers, remember:
Thanks a lot, California.

ARIZONA BORDER UPDATE-VERY PROMISING NUMBERS



As of February 2026, Arizona's border security has seen dramatic improvements, with illegal crossings and migrant encounters reaching historic lows according to U.S. Customs and Border Protection data.

Key statistics highlight the shift:

- Southwest border apprehensions in January 2026 totaled just 6,073 — a 93% drop from the historical monthly average of about 83,065 from FY1992–FY2024.
- Nationwide encounters hit record lows, with January 2026 at 34,631 — 87% below prior administration averages.
- For the ninth straight month, zero individuals apprehended by Border Patrol were released into the U.S. interior — every case processed under law, a modern-era milestone.
- Fiscal Year 2026 shows continued declines.

Arizona sectors like Tucson and Yuma reflect the national trend, with lower activity contributing to the overall drop — part of a broader plunge from peaks of over 2 million annual encounters in earlier years to 237,538 in FY2025, the lowest since 1970.

These numbers indicate stronger deterrence, faster processing, and reduced strain on border communities and state resources. While challenges like drug trafficking persist, the sharp reduction in crossings offers a clearer picture of progress on enforcement as of early 2026.

OFFERED WITHOUT COMMENT



By Shaila Dewan and Lazaro Gamio

Published Jan. 22, 2026

BURLINGTON NORTHERN-WILL THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT STEP IN?



The **BNSF Logistics Park Phoenix** proposal—a \$3.2 billion, ~4,320-acre freight rail intermodal and logistics complex near Wittmann, northwest of Surprise, AZ, along the BNSF line and US 60—was dealt a major setback in November 2025.

On November 5, 2025, the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors unanimously denied BNSF's request for a **Major Comprehensive Plan Amendment**. This would have changed the land use designation for ~800 acres (north of US 60, between 211th and 235th Avenues) from "Single Family Rural" to "Mixed Use Employment."

Why The Unanimous Rejection Of The Amendment?

Key reasons cited by supervisors, including District 4's Debbie Lesko:

- Insufficient infrastructure and public services e.g., roads, utilities, emergency response in place to support such large-scale development.
- Misalignment with the county's White Tank Grand Avenue Area Plan and overall rural character preservation.
- BNSF's requested change was needed to correct a prior county mapping error that downgraded the zoning use of their land, but the Supervisors emphasized broader concerns like traffic, noise, pollution, safety including hazardous materials, and community impacts over "smart growth" or economic benefits.

The vote did not kill the entire project—it only blocked this specific amendment. The core rezoning process remains open, though delayed.

Current update as of February 2026:

No construction has started, and no new major approvals have occurred since the denial. BNSF remains committed and is actively advancing as evidenced by:

- In January 2026, BNSF purchased ~56 acres across 14 transactions, including six homes and vacant lots in Wittmann for ~\$9–10.12 million in cash. These parcels are adjacent to their existing holdings, consolidating control and signaling intent to proceed despite opposition.
- BNSF states the project is "moving forward" to strengthen Arizona's supply chain, reduce regional train congestion, and support economic growth e.g., jobs, tax revenue. Their official site bnsflpp.com still promotes it actively, with no mention of cancellation.

The rezoning case, the companion to the denied amendment, has not been rescheduled recently, and local opposition continues, with concerns over quality-of-life and potential federal preemption via Rail Authority.

HOWEVER, railroads like BNSF often invoke Interstate Commerce Commission Termination Act of 1995 preemption to argue that local zoning, land-use denials, or permitting requirements cannot block or unduly restrict rail-served facilities.

The future remains uncertain, but BNSF is pushing ahead through land acquisition and regional coordination. How will local opposition respond?.....Stay tuned.....

ARIZONA'S 2026 SENATE MAJORITY PLAN TACKLES WELFARE FRAUD



The Minnesota Welfare Fraud Scandal: A Warning for Arizona

The Feeding Our Future scandal in Minnesota has revealed massive welfare fraud, with over \$250 million stolen from federal child nutrition programs during the pandemic—potentially reaching \$350–400 million including related schemes. Broader probes suggest billions in fraudulent Medicaid and aid payments nationwide since 2018.....and this is just the tip of the Iceberg.

Similar vulnerabilities in child nutrition, Medicaid, SNAP, and housing programs threaten states like Arizona, where improper Medicaid payments and growing federal aid reliance create real risks of taxpayer dollars being siphoned away.

Arizona’s Republican-Led 2026 Senate Majority Plan (click [here](#) for the complete plan) has introduced an accountability package to combat fraud, tighten oversight, and ensure public programs serve those truly in need.

Key measures include:

- SNAP and TANF Reforms — Stronger eligibility verification, cross-checks for income/residency, work requirements for able-bodied adults, and forensic audits to cut improper payments below 3% by 2030.
- Medicaid Safeguards — Enhanced fraud detection, stricter eligibility checks, and administrative improvements to prevent abuse.
- Unemployment and Broader Protections — Closing loopholes, eliminating wasteful vacant positions, and creating an AG office to target foreign and organized scams.
- Transparency & Enforcement — Regular fraud reports, swift case referrals, and recovered funds to hold fraudsters accountable.

These steps aim to root out criminal activity, recover misused money, and deter future abuse—learning directly from Minnesota’s failures.

Arizona taxpayers deserve a secure, efficient system.

As these bills advance in 2026, contact your legislators to support strong protections against fraud.

FUN FACT: Spoiler Alert! If you want to see in action what is called “*Bleeding The Beast*”, a term for this type of systemic government fraud, be sure to watch Netflix Season 4 THE LINCOLN LAWYER.....entertaining, informative and eye-opening.

info@azcommonsense.com

Paid for by the West Valley Republicans and Independent Coalition
Not Authorized By Any Party, Candidate or Candidate’s Committee

© 2026 by West Valley Republican and Independent Coalition



