



Legislator Education Survey 2010

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Completed: 7/09/2010 - 3:06 PM EDT

1 In an effort to balance our state budget, legislators have recently reduced Arizona's K-12 and university/community school budgets by more than \$2 billion during the past two years. During this next session, legislators still need to address the structural budget deficit that remains. Which of the following best describes your approach to balancing the budget?

Answer
Enact further cuts to K-12 and higher education funding as they make up a large share of the overall budget.
Stabilize funding to education at existing levels until our economy recovers.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Find ways to recover the \$2.2 billion that was cut. Examine how state revenues are spent and whether the state collects enough revenue to meet its needs.

Comment: 15 out of the previous 17 sessions have featured tax cuts, cuts that largely did not benefit the middle class. It is amazing that even in the current environment, there are still legislative leaders that want to cut corporate taxes further.

2 Do you support efforts to readdress Arizona's tax structure to alleviate the reliance on a fluctuating sales tax?

Answer
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> No

Comment: Sales taxes are the most regressive way to finance our schools, or any services for that matter.

3 Arizona's current budget was devised using a series of cuts, borrowing, financial deferrals and the voter-approved temporary sales tax increase. Which of the following fiscal measures would you consider supporting this year? (Please check all that apply.)

Answer
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> An effort to close existing tax loopholes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Increase personal income tax
Enact a flat tax on corporate/individual income
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Increase property tax
Eliminate tax credits (please specify)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Expand the sales tax to services
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> End tax exempt status for mining, etc.
Simplify the state tax code
Corporate tax cuts
Ensure corporate tax parity (large companies to pay same share as small businesses; tax exemption via out-of-state holding companies prohibited, etc.)
I think the only effective budget solution would be to introduce further tax cuts.
I think our current tax structure is adequate and we just need to wait until the economy rebounds.
Other

4 **A number of national surveys rank Arizona among the last in K-12 per-pupil funding. Arizona invests \$61 less per student than it did more than 20 years ago, according to the American Legislative Exchange Council. What do you think of this level of investment?**

Answer
Arizona spends too much on K-12 education. We need to enact further cuts.
This is an adequate level of investment. I do not think we need to invest more in K-12 funding.
Although I do not think this funding is adequate, I do not think we can increase funding for K-12 education at this time.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> It is embarrassing to be among the last in the nation in K-12 education funding. As a legislator, I will work this fiscal year (2010-2011) to increase funding for K-12 public schools.

Comment: "Embarrassing" is a charitable way of putting it.

I work with recent drop-outs. Except for providing jobs for people like me, I don't know how anyone who cares about our long term economic viability can seriously propose further cuts in education.

5 **Each year, more than \$60 million in Arizona taxpayer dollars are directed to School Tuition Organizations (STOs) for private school tuition through the tax credit program. What do you think about the current private school tax credit program? (Please check all that apply.)**

Answer

- More tax dollars should be allocated to expand the private school tuition program.
- The private school tuition program should be maintained as-is.
- The amount of tax dollars allocated to the private school tuition tax credit program should be reduced.
- The private school tax credit program should be repealed.
- The 10% processing fee that STOs are allowed to keep from donations for expenses should be reduced to a lower percentage. (Processing fees in Florida are capped at 3%.)
- There should be income limits on the families who benefit from the private school tax credit program. The original intent of the program was to provide access to private schools for poor children.
- I think any Arizona family should be able to take advantage of the tax-funded tuition benefits.
- I don't believe we should be using tax dollars for private school tuition assistance.

Comment: STO's are a poor substitute for an adequately funded public school system. The vast majority of students will be attending neighborhood public schools and they should be the priority before we subsidize private school education.

6 Do you believe reform is needed in our public education system? If so, which reforms do you support? (Please check all that apply.)

- Answer**
- No, reform is not needed.
 - Yes, reform is needed.
 - Yes, reform is needed but we need to establish adequate funding first.
 - I support the participation in a national standards program, i.e. NAEP.
 - I support increased charter school funding.
 - I support more teacher accountability.
 - I support the Common Core Standards created by the National Governors' Association and the state superintendents of education.
 - I support linking teacher pay to student test scores.
 - I support moving quickly to shut down failing schools.
 - I support creating more charter schools.
 - I support restructuring the "equalized funding" formula

Comment: Conservatives complain that "you can't throw money at the problem." At the same time, you can't expect improvement when you are slashing already meager budgets.

7 Some argue that we should move away from traditional public schools and transition to a system with more students attending state funded, privately-run charter schools and private schools with the aid of tax credits and/or vouchers. Do you support this plan?

Answer

Yes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Comment: We've seen that most parents want their children to go to local schools, and local schools have become important parts of our communities. The trouble with much of this rhetoric about charter schools and vouchers is that the people that advocate for them would likely be no more interested in adequately funding their new scheme than they were public education.

8 This year, legislators referred to voters a ballot measure to repeal First Things First, an early childhood education program with a dedicated funding source approved by voters in 2006. What do you support?

Answer
First Things First funding should be repealed.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> First Things First funding should be maintained in accordance with the original voter mandate.

Comment: The legislature ought to follow their oath and respect the constitutionally protected will of the voters.

9 Arizona currently has some of the largest K-12 classroom sizes in the nation. Please check the statements you agree with below. (Please check all that apply.)

Answer
Classroom size isn't a crucial factor for student success--many other factors are much more important and we should focus our priorities elsewhere.
I think it would be more efficient if we increased classroom size along with teacher pay. This would attract better teachers and decrease the cost of running the school.
I think classroom size is an important factor for student success, but I don't think we can currently afford to increase funding to pay for the additional teachers and/or school facilities.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Classroom size is one of the most important factors for student success--we should be working to reduce class size as one of our top priorities.
If parents believe that classroom size is important for their child, they should consider enrolling their children in a private school with a classroom enrollment cap.

Comment: In my work with drop-outs, I've seen the results of over-crowded classrooms first hand. If we pack our children in a room with 35 or 40 other students (a possibility with current planned cuts), how can we expect them to learn?

10 Arizona has one of the highest high school drop-out rates in the country. In the last budget, all state aid for adult GED (General Education Diploma) funding was eliminated. Please check the statement you agree with below.

Answer
GEDs should be funded by individuals.
The state should provide funding for GED programs.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I will work to restore funding for adult GED services.

Comment: I work in adult education and have seen how powerful a GED can be for people who would have no chance otherwise. I hear people saying that dropouts had their chance and blew it. I want to ask them what good it does the rest of us to throw 800,000 of our fellow Arizonans away?

11 The Arizona Constitution has many sections impacting the state budget and education. If elected, which of the following articles do you most identify with? (Please check all that apply.)

Answer
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The legislature shall provide by law for an annual tax sufficient, with other sources of revenue, to defray the necessary ordinary expenses of the state for each fiscal year. (Article IX, Section 3)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No tax shall be laid or appropriation of public money made in aid of any church, or private or sectarian school, or any public service corporation. (Article IX, Section 10)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The university and all other state educational institutions shall be open to students of both sexes, and the instruction shall be nearly as free as possible. (Article XI, Section 6: paragraph one)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The legislature shall make appropriations, to be met by taxation, as shall insure the proper maintenance of all state educational institutions & shall make such special appropriations as shall provide for their development & improvement. (Article XI, Sec10)

Comment: We all are supposed to swear an oath to follow this, right?

12 If you have children, what type of school(s) did they/do they attend? (Please check all that apply.)

Answer
Traditional Public School
Charter School
Private School
Home School
University/Community College/Higher Education
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A I have no children.