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Legislator Education Survey 2010

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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	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Enact further cuts to K-12 and higher education funding as they make up a large share of the overall budget.
<input type="checkbox"/>	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: Our fiscal imbalance must be addressed by increasing revenue through structural changes to the current tax laws and by enhancing non-tax revenues. Our tax structure is full of special interest loopholes, estimated by the Joint Legislative Budget Committee to be almost 3 billion dollars, about the same amount as last year's deficit. Given that the Arizona legislature is hamstrung by a 2/3 super-majority vote rule to increase revenues, one mechanism available is through the initiative process.

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

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

Comment: We are currently in a structural crisis, not just a cyclical crisis. According to the Joint Legislative Budget Committee, Arizona has dropped taxes 16 times in the previous 18 years. State tax revenues and fees per \$1,000 of personal income fell from \$54 in 1975, to \$29 in 2010. This "race to the bottom" must be stopped. Thirty-one legislators signed a no-tax pledge to Grover Norquist's anti-tax Washington group, in direct conflict with Arizona's state constitution, particularly regarding st

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
Increase personal income tax
Enact a flat tax on corporate/individual income
Increase property tax
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 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.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Simplify the state tax code
Corporate tax cuts
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 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

Comment: On a per capita basis, Arizona consistently ranks in the bottom ten states for state revenues and total expenditures. Expenditures were similarly low, 17% below the national per capita average. The non-partisan Tax Foundation ranks Arizona 41st on tax burden in 2008. We must repeal the private school tax credit program. It has diverted over 66 million dollars from the general fund to private schools last fiscal year. I do support personal income tax deductions for public school contributions.

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: We must reverse the priorities of this legislature. Arizona is now ranked 50th nationally in per-student investment, (approximately \$6,800 per student), while spending over \$40,000 per prison inmate (4th highest national ranking) and having the 3rd highest high school drop-out rate in the nation. Ensuring quality public education opportunities for our children would be my highest priority if elected to the State House of Representatives.

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.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 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%.)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 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.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I don't believe we should be using tax dollars for private school tuition assistance.

Comment: In 2008 Arizonans diverted more than 55.2 million dollars to private School Tuition Organizations (STOs). A separate law that gives similar dollar-for-dollar credits to corporations cost another 10.8 million in revenues, totaling \$66 million dollars! These are funds which should be going educate our public school students, not to private institutions.

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.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 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.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 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: Equalization laws were written in order to standardize the amount of funding a school district receives to educate its students, regardless of any differences and discrepancies in property wealth between districts. It is a major improvement over the previous system in which the more wealthy districts generated more revenue compared to lower income districts. The Common Core Standards will help standardize many differing national education elements into a more cohesive system.

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: Our public school system ought to be strengthened, not weakened. Some private and charter schools offer their students an excellent education, but my responsibility as a legislator is to work toward fully funding, strengthening and supporting our public school system from K-12 and our universities. It is toward that mission that I am dedicated.

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: Arizona voters approved First Things First to divert 80 cents from every pack of cigarettes toward this early childhood development program. I strongly support respecting the expressed will of the voters to keep this program alive and well.

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: I'm hard pressed to comment further on the critical importance of keeping classroom size down to where teachers can perform at their highest skill levels. Small classroom size is critical to learning.

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.
- I will work to restore funding for adult GED services.

Comment: Cutting GED is a backward and counter productive move. The legislature cut 3.4 million dollars from GED, and as a consequence, Arizona also lost 11 million dollars in federal matching funds! 18 % of all high school diplomas in 2008 were GED certificates; and already, 16% of all Arizonans over 25 do not have a high school diploma or GED certificate. This will hurt the future of young people setting out to join the work force, and is an impediment to attracting industries offering high paying jobs

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**
- 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)
 - 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)
 - 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)
 - 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: Our constitution as written in 1912 is a progressive document clearly identifying education as the cornerstone of opportunity for all its citizens. I strongly support this vision, and will, if elected, work my hardest to maintain it a reality.

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
 - N/A I have no children.

Comment: I have two great sons. Both attended and graduated from Tucson public schools. My oldest went on to graduate from MIT; my youngest graduated from Stanford University. They are both now graduate students at Stanford.
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