

There is still an empty seat in the state House of Representatives, but the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors is one step closer to filling the vacancy created by the [recent resignation](#) of Representative Jesus Rubalcalva (D-Gila Bend). On Wednesday, a panel of citizens [nominated three candidates](#) for the Board to consider; a vote on the appointment is not yet scheduled.



[Hundreds of laws](#) that the legislature enacted earlier this year became effective this week, including strengthened protections against [kids and pets in hot cars](#) and a change to law enforcement's ability to [seize property](#) that may be connected to criminal activity. Supporters of a [Gold Star memorial](#) can now raise funds to build a monument at the Capitol to honor individuals from Arizona who have been killed in military action from and after February 13, 1912, and members of the military can use the education and training they received during their service to [obtain licensure](#) to work in fields that are relevant to their military experience. Restaurant employees who are 18 can [serve alcohol](#), and podiatrists can [amputate toes](#). The definition and punishments for [acts of terrorism](#) are expanded. School districts have to allow [more time for public input](#) on textbooks to be used in classrooms, and there is a new effort to encourage [teachers in STEM fields](#). More Mohave County advertisers can use [electronic billboards](#), counties can [warn drivers](#) about unmaintained roads, and small business start-ups have a new [potential source of funding](#).

State agencies are working to implement other enacted changes, including the use of medication to [combat opioid addiction](#) in state inmates and additional [screening for newborns](#) with Severe Combined Immunodeficiency Disease (SCID).

At the Capitol, a panel [continues to plan](#) the state's leadership of a national effort to amend the U.S. Constitution, and the issue is [drawing more attention](#) as elected officials across the country weigh in on whether a Constitutional Convention would help or hurt the country. Arizona's convention of states, which will occur next month, is believed to be the first of its kind since the Civil War.

Backers of a proposal to repeal the legislature's expansion of the Empowerment Scholarship Account (ESA) Program successfully – though perhaps temporarily – [prevented enactment](#) of the expansion this week, when they turned in more than 111,000 signatures on their citizen initiative. The Secretary of State will spend weeks verifying whether the signatures are from voters registered in Arizona; if there are 75,321 valid signatures, Arizonans will have the chance to vote for or against ESA expansion in the November 2018 election.

Supporters of other citizen initiatives – including an effort to invalidate the legislature's changes to the initiative process itself – [did not turn in enough signatures](#) to be considered for the ballot. A legal challenge to the legislative changes to initiatives also was unsuccessful: a Superior Court judge [ruled this week](#) that the legislature's action did not violate the Constitution when it altered requirements for the

process by which citizens can seek changes to the law. This means that the Secretary of State's office will hold signatures and petitions to a standard of "strict compliance" to every legal requirement – like the size of paper and of the font on petitions – as they validate signatures for the ESA initiative.

Judges also [upheld Proposition 206](#) – a measure that increased Arizona's minimum wage when it was approved by voters last year. The Arizona Supreme Court rejected a challenge from the Arizona Chamber of Commerce, which argued that the proposal violated a law that bans increased state costs without identifying a funding source to cover the additional revenue. The unanimous Court ruling said state expenditures under the initiative were indirect, and therefore not subject to the revenue-source law.

As summer nears an end, legislators are finding more reasons to return to the Capitol. [A panel](#) began its work to understand and simplify state taxation of digital goods and services, and plans to meet monthly throughout the rest of the year. Legislators who have convened meetings in rural areas of the state to discuss [reforms to the state's pension system for public safety personnel](#) brought their discussion back to the Capitol with a hearing this week, and next week a Senate committee plans to [host a forum](#) on Arizona businesses and industries.

Healthcare Debate Continues and Governor Calls for Medical Malpractice Limits

Though Congress is adjourned for an August break, [several members of Arizona's delegation](#) have joined a "Problem Solvers Caucus" to craft bipartisan proposals for healthcare changes. It is not yet clear whether their efforts will be successful, but the issue continues to hold the attention of individuals and organizations across the state – and across the country.

Governor Ducey has other ideas about federal changes, as well: this week, he called for a [federal cap on medical malpractice awards](#) that he believes will reduce the burden of practicing medicine. He advocates for a federal malpractice cap to override a provision in the Arizona Constitution that voters have repeatedly failed to change. The Governor said reform of malpractice rewards has worked in other states – like Texas. His position quickly drew concern from the Arizona Attorneys for Justice, who argued Congress should not override state laws.