

The end of the 2017 legislative session is likely near, though progress continues to slow to a crawl at the Capitol. Legislators' attention centers almost entirely on behind-the-scenes budget negotiations; with just over 100 bills still to be considered this year, there is little non-budget work to consume lawmakers' time. Tuesday marked the 100th day of the session – by rule, the date at which the session should end. Legislative leaders extended that goal, and now have one week to continue work before legislative *per diem* reimbursements are reduced.

2018 election dynamics continued to take shape this week, as legislative candidates filed their campaign papers and [numerous candidates](#) registered to challenge Superintendent of Public Instruction Diane Douglas.



In the limited time spent considering bills this week, legislators advanced [a proposal](#) to alter teacher certification requirements and allow a certification that reflects “subject matter expert” knowledge from other training and experiences. Critics say the change will reduce teacher qualifications in Arizona; the Governor believes it will allow people with substantial expertise to share their knowledge in the classroom.

A conference committee [amended](#) a proposal to expand the number of teachers that can instruct students with special needs. The final version of the bill directs the

State Board of Education to amend its rules concerning certified special education personnel to remove confusion; it now awaits one more vote in both the House and Senate.

Support from the Speaker of the House allowed a [ban on texting for teenage drivers](#) and a mandate for [computer coding education](#) to advance. The Senate passed a proposal to expand the [jurisdiction of college security officers](#), and both the House and Senate continued to advance limitations on required [background checks](#) for private gun sales.

The House gave final approval to [a bill](#) that would ensure kids can use sunscreen in schools and camps – a step that could put Arizona [ahead of other states](#) in the fight for skin protection.

The legislature has not engaged in many high-profile debates on the Department of Child Safety this year, as the agency continues to reduce investigatory backlogs. But deep division on the work of the agency still exists, and became evident in a [tense floor debate](#) this week. Amendments that would have added specific limitations and directions for DCS processes stalled the progress of [a bill](#) that would establish a new legislative committee to oversee DCS operations and outcomes.

Both the House and Senate unanimously approved a bill to [prevent surprise medical billings](#), and a proposal that limits the time a member of a [health regulatory board](#) can serve, and prescribes other authorities and oversight responsibilities of the boards.

This week, the Governor signed laws that strengthen the fight against [child sex trafficking](#), outline the [audio and video capabilities](#) required for telemedicine services, enhance penalties for [violence against police officers](#), and [green light the growers](#) (and other servings of alcohol). The Governor has enacted a total of 177 bills this year, and vetoed four.

Budget Update

Budget progress is uncertain, and legislators have differing views on how close state leaders are to an agreement that will allow the legislative session to come to a close. Major points of disagreement seem to still include the Governor's desire for more funding for university facilities and research, though it is also clear that a legislative majority supports a [pay increase for public school teachers](#) that is larger than the one proposed by Governor Ducey.

Though non-budget legislation continues to move, some proposals have become connected to the budget negotiations. Issues like changes to length and penalties of [Temporary Assistance for Needy Families](#) (TANF) benefits and fees for [newborn disease screening](#) are now being discussed in the context of the state's financial plan for the coming year.

Arizona Enacts ADA Limits Despite Concern from Individuals with Disabilities

After months – and even years – of negotiations and work to protect the rights of individuals with disabilities, this week state leaders [approved a bill](#) that overrode compromise efforts and enacted new restrictions on rights under Arizona's laws regarding access for people with disabilities.

SB 1406 was the vehicle for a compromise agreement between individuals with disabilities and business associations seeking a halt to high numbers of lawsuits for parking lot violations of the Arizonans with Disabilities Act. Compromise was sought after an earlier bill (SB 1198) failed in a House committee. The compromise was short-lived, however, and the House and Senate approved a final version that violated the points of agreement reached during negotiations.

The [final version](#) of the bill establishes a “cure period,” allowing businesses to delay legal enforcement of ADA protections, and requires an individual aggrieved by an ADA violation to notify the business owner in writing prior to taking legal action. It outlines additional restrictions, and exempts websites from ADA compliance.

The enacted bill drew widespread media attention, as well as [sharp criticism](#):

- [“Governor signs bill giving businesses time to fix disability access issues before lawsuits,” ABC 15](#)
- [“Senate approves bill giving civil rights violators ‘cure period,’” Arizona Capitol Times](#)
- [“Arizona lawmakers undo disability-lawsuit compromise; Ducey signs off,” Arizona Republic](#)
- [“Arizona Legislature approves disability lawsuits bill,” AZ Family](#)
- [“Arizona Gov. Ducey to Decide On Bill That Pits Business Rights Against Disability Rights,” KJZZ](#)
- [“What’s Next After Ducey Signs Arizona Disabilities Bill Into Law?” KJZZ](#)
- [“Arizona Legislature approves disability lawsuits bill,” KVOA Tucson](#)

On the Bright Side...

The conversation about mental health is unfolding in [unusual, high-profile ways](#).