



2021 Legislative Session Summary

Introduction

The First Regular Session of the 55th Legislature was certainly one for the books. The lengthy session was tied for the third longest session on record, stretching to 171 days. Although you might expect that this was due to the challenges of holding session amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, in reality, it was simply due to difficult and highly partisan negotiations on the fiscal year (FY) 2022 budget. The session was held in a hybrid format, with the vast majority of work being done virtually. As everyone adjusted to the “new normal” of lobbying via Zoom, AHAC’s positions and letters were more valuable than ever.

AHAC Leadership members met in February, March and April to review all introduced legislation and take formal positions on measures the Coalition deemed important. The results of those meetings are highlighted below.

Issues Supported and Opposed During Session

Over the course of the nearly record-breaking 171-day session, 249 bills related to the practice of medicine, patient care, or health insurance were tracked for AHAC. Each bill was reviewed by the Coalition members for relevance and potential action. Ultimately, the Coalition sent formal communication to the Legislature on six measures:

- [SB1270](#) (insurance; prescription drugs; step therapy) / AHAC support
- [SB1377](#) (civil liability; public health pandemic) / AHAC support
- [HB2454](#) (telehealth; health care providers; requirements) / AHAC support
- [HB2621](#) (prior authorization; uniform request form) / AHAC support
- [HB2622](#) (nonretaliation policies; health care institutions) / AHAC support
- [SB1457](#) (abortion; unborn child; genetic abnormality) / AHAC oppose

Two of the measures (HB2621 and HB2622) were also supported by the Coalition in 2020 but did not make it across the finish line due to COVID-19 truncating the session prematurely. All the bills supported by AHAC were signed into law by the Governor. Unfortunately, although nearly every health care organization opposed, SB1457 also passed and was signed into law.

Email Updates During Session

Every week during the session, AHAC members received a legislative update on activity that occurred during the week and upcoming committee hearings with agendas. An example from week seven is below.



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AHAC Weekly Legislative Update

We look forward to seeing our Leadership members on Tuesday evening for our next virtual meeting at 6pm. We will provide an update on where the priority bills are and discuss potential letters of support or opposition to measures moving through the process.

Weekly Recap

Although there was almost no Committee action this week, there were still very long days with incredible amounts of floor action. Most days, each Chamber waded through at least seven to ten Committee of the Whole (COW) calendars, and also held final votes, or Third Reads, on many bills. This week is known as “Crossover Week,” since both chambers send as many bills as possible across the Capitol complex to the opposite chamber to begin the process all over again. Of the more than 1700 bills introduced this year, nearly 1000 of them did not receive a hearing in committee in their chamber of origin, making them mostly dead for this year. There is always a possibility that the idea in the underlying bill could be resurrected using a ‘strike-everything’ amendment, or striker, but these will be few and far between moving ahead. The universe of what may become law this year is now limited. As far as timing, we now have four weeks for the Senate to consider House bills and vice versa. Regular Committee work begins again starting Monday, and both Chambers Health Committees will be meeting.

Negotiations continue on several priority bills, including the telehealth omnibus ([HB2454](#)). A stakeholder meeting was held this week involving the Governor’s office, ArMA, the health plans, and others. Stay tuned for further developments. [SB1457](#), the extremist anti-choice bill that criminalizes physicians, was approved by the Senate Committee of the Whole this week, but it has not received a final vote. ArMA, together with ACOG-AZ and many others, continue to advocate against the measure. To end on a happy note, [SB1377](#), which protects physicians and other healthcare providers from frivolous lawsuits as a result of the pandemic, passed the Senate this week by a vote of 18-12. It is headed to the House for consideration. Finally, an AHAC priority bill, [HB2622](#), which extends protections against retaliation to contractors of hospitals, will be considered in Senate Health on Wednesday.

By the Numbers

- Days of Session: 47
- Bills Introduced: 1708
- Bills Passed: 42
- Bills Vetoed: 0
- Bills Signed: 35

Key Dates and Deadlines

- *Senate Bill Introduction Deadline: Monday, February 1st*
- *House Bill Introduction Deadline: Monday, February 8th*



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- *Last Day to Hear Bills in Chamber of Origin: Friday, February 19th*
- Last Day to Hear Bill in Opposite Chamber: Friday, March 26th
- 100th Day of Session: Tuesday, April 20th

Italics indicate the deadline has passed.

Upcoming Hearings

Monday, March 1

- 2pm: House Health (you can watch remotely [here](#))
 - [Agenda](#)
 - If you would like to testify remotely on any of the bills, you must email at least 24 hours in advance to HouseHHS@azleg.gov and include the bill you wish to speak on, and who you represent. You can also register positions within the RTS system, but that alone will not be sufficient if you wish to speak.

Wednesday, March 3

- 9am: Senate Health (you can watch remotely [here](#))
 - [Agenda](#)
 - If you would like to testify remotely on any of the bills, you must email at least 24 hours in advance to SenateHHS@azleg.gov and include the bill you wish to speak on, and who you represent. You can also register positions within the RTS system, but that alone will not be sufficient if you wish to speak.

If your organization takes a position on or has any information related to a particular bill, don't hesitate to let your fellow AHAC members know – please email Jon Amores at jamores@azmed.org or Meghan McCabe at mmccabe@azmed.org, and we will distribute. Thanks again for your participation and commitment to improving Arizona healthcare.

Membership

- **ArMA:** Marc Leib, MD, JD (Chair) and Ross Goldberg, MD
- **AOMA:** Josephine Zammuto and Janet Weigel
- **Pima County Medical Society:** Dennis Carey; Tim Fagan, MD and Rebecca Franzi-Osborne, MD
- **Arizona Society of Anesthesiologists:** Bill Thompson, MD; Heidi Tavel, MD and Joni Bowers
- **American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology, AZ Section:** Katherine Glaser, MD and Julie Kwatra, MD
- **Arizona Ophthalmological Society:** Jordana Smith, MD and Linda DiBiase
- **Arizona Radiological Society:** Ajay Bhatnagar, MD and Christina Ferraro, MD



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- **Arizona Dermatology and Dermatological Surgery Society:** Aaron Mangold, MD and Arash Koochek, MD
- **Arizona Urological Society:** Jason Jameson, MD
- **Arizona Psychiatric Society:** Don Fowls, MD; Jasleen Chhatwal, MD and Teri Harnisch

Future Efforts

Recruitment: AHAC will begin a recruitment drive in the Fall and Winter of 2021 – the Coalition needs to grow in order to become even more effective in its advocacy efforts. If you know of any specialty societies or organizations that would be interested in strengthening their voice at the Capitol, let us know. AHAC is a tremendous tool to both stay informed and get involved in the policymaking process.

Legislation: Every year, AHAC members are asked to provide input on possible legislation for the upcoming session, and 2021-22 will be no different. Over the next few months, please consider any possible legislative issues your organization may have, and the Coalition can discuss them in upcoming meetings as it prepares for next year.

Feedback: In addition to our advocacy and legislative efforts, AHAC is also committed to receiving feedback on ways to improve its membership experience. If you have any suggestions or comments on this, the materials Coalition members receive, or other initiatives / directions AHAC should pursue, please don't hesitate to let us know. We value the feedback we receive from all Coalition members, and we want to strengthen your ability not only to engage in advocacy, but to attract and retain members within your own organization. Let us know how we can help.