

A New Governing Majority Leadership Vision for Democratic Unity: A Better Arizona

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A New Governing Majority Leadership Vision for Democratic Unity

The Democratic Party, for the first time in more than half a century, has the chance to control a majority in one or both Arizona State legislative chambers in 2021. This election presents our party with the single most significant opportunity in a generation to advance public policy that reflects our values.

While this moment brings opportunity, it inherently comes with immense responsibility and a sacred obligation to our fellow Arizonans. Shouldering this responsibility will require the Democratic Caucus to reimagine itself and its role in State Government.

We cannot wait until after Election Day to prepare for the step-change needed in our approach and strategy. We must be ready to hit the ground running and drive Arizona's policy agenda when the legislative session begins in January.

This undertaking will require a new level of unity, respect, and communication among our caucus and will necessitate the challenging work of navigating a divided government while always staying true to our Democratic values. None of this will be possible unless we first create a strong bond of unity between *all* Democratic legislators at the Arizona Capitol.

This document outlines the governing principles and leadership vision that will enable a robust new governing majority and foster lasting Democratic unity in our State Legislature. This document is not – and never will be – set in stone. We will continuously work with all caucus members on revisions to ensure our vision is comprehensive in its inclusiveness and prioritizations.

Leadership Team – Why We Are Running

This leadership team is running to advance Democratic values at the legislature and instill a culture of accountability within the Democratic Caucus in establishing a new governing majority of the House of Representatives. We are running to develop a strong culture of trust within our caucus, creating a team environment within which each member will be accountable to and supported by one another. Establishing effective communication is the utmost priority for this caucus. We will work tirelessly for every one of our members. We wholeheartedly commit to a transparent and collaborative decision-making process that will always keep the caucus' best interests in mind. Each caucus member will have input in the caucus' decision-making process. Additionally, each member will have a clear understanding of the direction of the caucus. All members should and will have an active role in how our caucus moves forward together.

We are running for House leadership because Democrats must have a thorough plan to put these concepts into action during this time. We must build a diverse coalition to make it a reality.

Speaker of the House – Diego Espinoza

My roots are firmly planted in my community. I am a local small business owner, having run my family's restaurant for the past fifteen years in Tolleson – the city I've called home my entire life. In fact, this restaurant has been owned by my family for four generations. I have served in elected office at the state and municipal levels for twenty-two years, including a term as Vice Mayor of Tolleson, gaining an intimate understanding of our state and local government operations. I have also served in several State and National legislative leadership roles, including co-chair of the Arizona Latino Legislative Caucus and on Boards of Directors at the National Association of Latino Elected Officials, the National Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators, and The Arizona State University Morrison Institute for Public Policy.

I have led the fight on numerous legislative issues throughout my tenure at the Capitol. As co-chair of the Latino Caucus, I worked with community groups to lead the boycott of Motel 6 after reports that several of

their locations provided guest lists to immigration enforcement in a blatant act of discrimination against my constituents. Our efforts led to serious oversight from the Attorney General's Office to ensure consumer protection and privacy. Additionally, I led negotiations with legislative Republicans in 2016 to restore enrollment in KidsCare, expanding eligibility for health insurance to 30,000 Arizona children. I have also been the legislature's leading advocate for DREAMERS having access to the in-state college tuition rates they rightly deserve – a fight that continues to this day.

This year, I have personally felt the brutal impact of COVID-19 on my business and employees. The weight of ensuring my employees can keep good jobs, support their families, and stay healthy during this pandemic has taken its toll – I sold my home earlier this year so that our payroll would not be interrupted. Everyone has been asked to sacrifice during this immensely difficult time. However, I am still grateful to live out my American dream as a small business owner every day. I want to help lead our Democratic Caucus and the House of Representatives to create the opportunity that I've had for the next generation of Arizona leaders.

The Speaker of the Arizona House of Representatives' role occupies a unique position within our State Government. The Speaker is not only the *Presiding Officer of the Arizona House of Representatives* but also the de facto leader – in partnership with the Majority Leader and Majority Whip – of the Democratic Caucus. Be it setting norms of procedure, driving the caucus' message and goals, or liaising with other state officials, the role of Speaker is complex and multifaceted. The role of Speaker also carries with it a unique weight and responsibility owed not only to our caucus but to all Arizonans. The Speaker must always understand that the needs of the State of Arizona are paramount and must transcend any ideological or political agenda. The Speaker of the House must always be ready to work towards building a better Arizona for all and must do so while upholding our core values of honesty and transparency.

United in purpose, the House Democratic Caucus can achieve progress for our state that few thought possible even just a few years ago. I will use my experience as a small business owner and public servant to advance unity within our caucus and advance the House Democratic legislative agenda.

I humbly submit my name to be your next Speaker of the Arizona House of Representatives.

Majority Leader – Jennifer Longdon

As a mother and a survivor of gun violence, I feel the “fierce urgency of now,” recognizing that the future for our children is being legislated today.

I am a member of our nation's largest minority community (one-in-three people live with a disability). At the deepest level, I know what it means to be denied a seat at the table, what it feels like to be discounted in our society, and what's at stake for those who have been ignored in our public discourse.

We are poised as a nation for a fearless examination of centuries of inequity in this country. I will use my perspective as a leader in our caucus and a marginalized person to advance the civil rights of Arizona's voiceless communities, emphasizing intersectionality and empowering individuals that have been left out of the process. I want to utilize my strengths to move us forward.

I have served as Chair of the Phoenix Mayor's Commission on Disability issues and helped usher our historic Non-Discrimination Ordinance into effect. As Chair of the Statewide Independent Living Council, I oversaw the allocation of \$48 million for the State Plan for Independent Living. As Chair of the Reeve Foundation Public Impact Panel, I led an exploration of workforce development for people with disabilities. Not least of all, as President of Arizonans for Gun Safety, we conducted the largest gun buy-back in Arizona history.

I also know what commitment and determination require of a person, even in the most difficult circumstances. I've lived it. The role of our Caucus' Majority Leader will not only be a procedural one. It will

require fortitude to negotiate during a time of divided government and deliver real results for Arizona's working families.

As the Majority Leader, it will be my duty to work with each member of our caucus individually to construct the House Democratic legislative agenda for the next two years. The policy priorities laid out in this document are only a starting point – I will personally ensure that each member has input in the final caucus policy agenda.

I will bring the lessons of my life experience to our leadership in the House's new Democratic majority with the primary goal of creating unity in our caucus. I've been bringing people together in common cause to achieve progress for our society my entire life, and this must be our focus if we are to succeed in a legislative majority.

Majority Whip – Andrea Dalessandro

While not an Arizonan by birth, like many of our fellow citizens, I am an Arizonan by choice. I was born in the shadow of the Statue of Liberty in New Jersey. After a career spanning over 25 years as a public school teacher, I moved to Arizona to retire. I also worked as a CPA/tax accountant.

My retirement was short-lived. After a few years of building Democratic clubs in deep-red places, I decided to run in 2008 for the State House. In 2008 and 2010, I ran in seemingly unwinnable races for the house in the old LD30. Those races taught me the importance and value of listening to voters and running in a competitive race. In 2012 I ran in the newly drawn LD2 and won my first race for the House. After about a year, I was appointed to the State Senate.

I've spent the last seven years in the State Senate fighting for Charter School reform and against the expansion of vouchers. I've also fought against the systemic defunding of our public education system.

I've also been a leader on the environment and brought progressive leadership to the State Senate. In 2020 I received the highest progress score of the entire legislature according to Progress Arizona's analysis of voting records. I was one of only four legislators to receive an A+ on the Sierra Club's Report Card in 2019. I am currently the State Lead for the National Caucus of Environmental Legislators, and I tirelessly fight to address the growing threat of climate change.

As we enter the next chapter as Arizona Democrats, I'm focused on two things. First, bringing our divided caucus together through communication. And secondly, I want to take my years as the most experienced female House member and as a mother and grandmother, to share the importance of mentoring the next generation of strong Arizona women and men for long term and sustainable Democratic leadership. I am running for Whip to share my institutional knowledge to ensure we have a strong mentoring relationship with our new members and build unity, respect, and communication within our caucus and with our Senate colleagues.

Unity, Respect, and Communication: Our Governing Principles

Democratic Values and Unity

The 2020 Arizona Democratic Party Platform vision is entitled "Roots in History, Vision for the Future." Arizona Democrats must govern with a keen understanding of our Nation and State's past while approaching policy with a bold plan that looks to the future. At its core, our party believes that all individuals should be treated equally – this means equal access and equal representation in our Democracy – and we place the highest value on human rights above all. We will fight tirelessly on behalf of our constituents to advance these values, and we will stand as a united front against any attack against these principles.

Additionally, we will have zero tolerance for attacks or efforts that seek to divide the House Democratic Caucus. We will work adamantly to resolve disagreements through a consensus-building process. Our leadership team will defend and advocate for every single member of our caucus without exception. We must create and preserve caucus unity as the necessary condition for any other governing principle to be engaged.

A Members-Driven Caucus

Our continued commitment to ensuring collaboration between our caucus members is a core value of this leadership team. We know that to be successful, we cannot create a top-down leadership structure. Instead, our goal is to ensure that all members, regardless of seniority, are heard. We will respect our members voting records on issues that are important to their constituents. While we are all guided by our core Democratic principles, we also must foster a mutual understanding and respect for what makes each legislative district unique.

Trust and Accountability

The entirety of the Democratic caucus must be able to rely upon the leadership team to remain true to their word on all matters. This trust is especially important for matters of strategy affecting the direction and priorities of the legislature. Effective leadership cannot get off the ground without the confidence of a unified caucus that our words will match our actions. This leadership team is making crystal clear its commitments in this document and welcomes all measures of accountability that invariably come with these obligations. As a part of this process, we commit to revisiting this document with the caucus regularly throughout the 2021 and 2022 legislative sessions in order to conduct real-time assessments of our progress and adherence to the commitments and principles we have written here.

Transparency and Communication

One of the most significant opportunities for improvement at the legislature is enhanced and effective communication. Our caucus' internal communication between the leadership team and all other members will include full transparency in the decision-making process. Our commitment is to over-communicate so that no member is ever caught off guard by a leadership decision. We will also commit to ensuring that communication silos are broken down to the fullest possible extent so that decisions, strategies, and concerns are properly understood and communicated at the group-level.

Additionally, this leadership team understands the value of stakeholder and organizational input in the policy-making process. We commit to collaborative governance that allows affected stakeholders to have their voices heard throughout the legislative process.

Responsiveness

Government must be responsive to the people in order to maintain a healthy and vibrant Democracy in our society. Our leadership team commits to expanding the role of the House's Constituent Services Department and ensuring capacity for all sixty members of the House. We will strive to ensure that members' needs for administrative support and scheduling are being heard and addressed.

Policy Priorities for the New Governing Majority

Healthcare

Even before COVID-19 irrevocably changed our lives and pushed Arizona's healthcare system to the brink, the flawed healthcare policies pursued by Governor Ducey and the GOP-controlled legislature had badly impaired equal access to quality healthcare for far too many Arizonans. Ensuring equal access to quality, affordable, and accessible healthcare will be a prime focus of our Democratic Caucus. We will pursue common-sense measures to improve access to quality healthcare for all Arizonans, regardless of zip code.

We will establish the *100% Healthcare Access Task Force* – a group of stakeholders including hospitals, health insurers, human services providers, local officials, and community leaders who will advise the legislature on ways to ensure that 100% of Arizonans have access to quality, affordable healthcare. This task force will be charged with addressing any state-level challenges to our healthcare system posed by policy changes at the federal level and by the changing demographics of our population. It will also study measures designed to reduce uncompensated care at hospitals and strengthen the rural hospital safety net.

Education

Public education will be a dominant priority under this leadership team. In addition to supporting the Invest In Ed ballot measure (Prop.208), our team is committed to finding additional long-term solutions that will guarantee our public schools are not only funded but enabled to become the highest performing in the nation. This vision includes truly recognizing the P-12 and Higher Education system as our society's great equalizer by passing comprehensive reforms to increase equity in the system.

Part of this process will include the creation of an *Educational Equity Task Force*. This group will consist of stakeholders from district and charter schools, employers, teachers, administrators, apprentice programs, and other community leaders who will advise the legislature on real ways to eliminate inequities in our current education system.

Economy

Our economy is fueled by many factors, and we aim to incorporate a dynamic set of policy solutions that match the complexity of our system. Our core values will help us advance an economy that provides more opportunity for the middle-class and limited-income communities, requires that corporations and wealthy individuals pay their fair share for the collective good, respects workers' rights, and enables a business environment that thrives on innovation.

Training the next generation of Arizona's workforce will require significant investment in Career and Technical Education and a thriving community college system. We must also support our returning veterans with robust retraining plans that will transition their military experience to successful civilian careers. Finally, providing flexibility to our workforce means we must pursue policies that will help alleviate the financial burden of child care on hardworking families.

Workers are the backbone of Arizona's economy, and we must ensure fair labor practices and protect the right to collective bargaining. The protection of hardworking families is a core Democratic value, and it will be reflected in caucus policy priorities and engagement processes.

Our leadership team also believes that we need a bold infrastructure plan for Arizona that does not stop at merely rehabilitating our transportation system. We need a comprehensive plan to expand broadband internet service to rural areas and improve transportation projects in rural and tribal communities. These activities will create an enormous stimulus in our economy statewide.

We must also expand access to capital for small businesses – especially those in rural and tribal communities, those low-income areas, and minority/women-owned businesses.

Working together, we can create a business environment and workforce development plan that works for all Arizonans.

Racial Justice

We continue to see racism in all its forms play out across the country and our state. There are still people in positions of power and influence who see minority communities as a threat to their way of life instead of

seeing us as neighbors. Ensuring the fair treatment of BIPOC and immigrants in our society has been a constant struggle throughout the American story. This struggle and story entered its next chapter in 2020 with unprecedented popular support for long overdue and meaningful reforms. The Arizona Legislature and Democratic Leadership must rise to this moment.

In June, House and Senate Democrats asked Governor Ducey to commence a Special Legislative Session to address police mistreatment of African Americans. We are still hopeful that our Governor will see the need for immediate action on these issues, but should he choose to ignore the imminent necessity for change, we will fight next year – in a legislative majority – for reforms.

Native American communities' deep roots in Arizona demand the creation of an Indigenous Affairs Standing Committee in the House of Representatives. Recognizing, honoring, and working with our indigenous Nations on historical treaties and cross-jurisdiction issues requires a government-to-government solution. We are committed to creating it with input from the Arizona Indigenous Peoples Caucus and tribal leaders throughout the state.

Protecting Democracy

Institutional reform and democracy expansion are central to ensuring fundamental fairness in the political process – especially for our minority communities. We are committed to making it easier to register to vote and making it easier for Arizonans to cast their ballots while ensuring the highest integrity in our election processes.

This goal means enacting common-sense reforms that have proven successful all over the country, such as same-day and automatic voter registration, strengthening and expanding the Permanent Early Voting List (PEVL), and increasing ways to vote in-person with contactless options. We should make necessary changes to our vote-by-mail system that will ensure more valid ballots are counted, such as counting all ballots that are postmarked on or before Election Day. And we must repeal recent laws that discourage Arizonans from voting and make the citizens' initiative process more difficult. We will defend against attacks on Arizona's system of direct democracy.

Even basic access to polling places is under threat. For example, a relevant GAO report indicates that 60% of polling places in the nation held "pervasive barriers" to allowing people with disabilities access to their polling place. We will work to ensure that County Recorders have the knowledge and resources to prioritize safe and equitable access to a private and autonomous ballot.

It seems that in this country, we encounter a pivotal moment once every century when the will and opportunity to make real progress in remedying racial injustice reaches a tipping point. We believe that moment is now. In 2021 we will work with our diverse communities to honor civil rights hero John Lewis by passing a state-level Voting Rights Act.

Additional Policy Priorities

Arizonans have told us that their priorities are education, jobs, and healthcare while overlaying the urgency for racial justice and protecting democracy as a focus on all our policy work. There are many other issues we must address. However, we are fortunate that the Democratic Caucus is comprised of members with the expertise and passion for also working on key policy areas such as but not limited to:

- Environment and Climate Change
- Passage of the Equal Rights Amendment
- Fair Labor Laws
- LGBTQ Rights
- Disability Rights and Congregate Care Reform
- Reproductive Rights

- Gun Safety
- Criminal Justice and Corrections Reform
- Electoral Reform
- Equitable Tax Code Reform

A New Budget for a New Governing Majority

Our commitment is to begin a budgeting process that considers not only the current financial state of Arizona's revenues vs. expenses but is one that is built by members for the people we represent.

We encourage discussion, we encourage debate, and most importantly, we promote a transparent process where the votes for the budget will not be done in the middle of the night while Arizonans are asleep. They will be done in the public eye where people will be able to come in and listen to their elected representatives make these decisions. This process will be transparent, accountable, participative, and filled with integrity.

Bringing Back the Subcommittee Process

In order to highlight our obligation to a transparent appropriations process, we will bring back the subcommittee process for creating the State Budget. These subcommittees will cover the comprehensive range of fiscal issues facing Arizona, including:

- Health & Human Services
- P-12 & Higher Education
- Transportation & Infrastructure
- Criminal Justice

Redistricting: Impact for a Decade

Arguably the most impactful and politically significant decision that Arizona's Speaker of the House will make in the next ten years is for his or her appointment to Arizona's Independent Redistricting Commission (IRC). Our appointment to the IRC will reflect our core Democratic values, and the selection process will be nothing short of fully transparent and inclusive. We commit that all members of the House Democratic Caucus will have input into the selection process under our leadership.

This leadership team is already actively involved in the Arizona Census that will guide the redistricting process next year. Diego Espinoza currently serves on the statewide Arizona Complete Count Committee, and Jennifer Longdon serves on the City of Phoenix Complete Count Committee; these are groups of community leaders tasked with ensuring that our 2020 Census is as complete and accurate as possible. The work of these committees is targeted to address historically undercounted populations. This is the first step in establishing a fair redistricting process, and we've already begun the work.

Administration, Operations and Staff

COVID-19 Plan for House Operations

Extensive measures will be taken to safeguard the health and safety of House members, employees, and visitors during the COVID-19 pandemic. To accomplish this, our leadership team will develop an official COVID-19 workplace health and safety plan for the House premises that will rely on the best public health guidance available.

Additionally, it is our obligation to ensure that full transparency and public participation in the legislative process is not compromised under the extraordinary circumstances presented by the pandemic. This requires that Arizonans have the ability to view House proceedings online reliably. We will accommodate all remote participation methods for the public – including email, phone, and the Request to Speak system. Public participation in the legislative process is fundamental to our democracy, and we are committed to preserving it without compromise.

Staff Commitment

Our leadership team will build an administration and staff structure to ensure the needs of every member of the caucus are being met, and staffing resources will be available equally to all members of the caucus. To this end, we are committing that the administrative staff-to-member ratio reflects all of our members' needs.

We will work alongside our Communications Director to develop an individualized media plan with every single member of our caucus. These plans will center on each member's legislative priorities to achieve new recognition for every caucus member's hard work.

In addition, we commit to hiring a staff that reflects the diversity of our state – including a policy analyst that will focus on Indigenous Affairs and Outreach.

We must also ensure that our staff has access to the resources they need to be successful. We commit to an open process that will allow all our staff members to have their voices heard, ensuring constant communication about the needs and issues facing our hardworking staff.

We will engage appropriate consultants and experts to help us shape this transition.

Staff Development and Mentoring Program

As leaders of the House of Representatives, we commit to creating a staff development program that will help elevate House employees professionally. We can accomplish this by proactively seeking opportunities to involve the House's administrative staff in more substantive work and offering policy staff opportunities to work in new policy areas to create learning and development opportunities. We will also look for opportunities to bring in outside organizations to assist in staff development and training. Our goal is to enhance our staff's experience within the legislature and create dynamic opportunities for upward movement and interdisciplinary training.

We also commit to creating a formal mentoring program that will pair freshman lawmakers with more senior members of the caucus for regular meetings and updates. This will accelerate learning curves for a legislative body that experiences high turnover rates each election cycle.

Senate Relationships

To maintain an effective Democratic governing majority, the House leadership team must maintain consistent and effective communication with the Senate. Regardless of the makeup of the Arizona Senate, we will conduct weekly meetings with the Senate Democratic leadership team throughout legislative sessions to coordinate efforts in the most effective manner. We will work with the Senate Democratic Caucus to gather both chambers before the session to discuss proposed legislation. Additionally, a Democratic House Majority must ensure that Senate Democrats' bills are heard and considered fairly throughout the legislative process. We will work in leadership to never lose sight of these priorities.

Republican Caucuses and Governor's Administration Relationships

Our Democratic Caucus will approach all of our colleagues in an open and honest fashion. We would seek to form a mutual understanding with both the 9th Floor and Legislative Republicans that governs our relationships without compromising our vision and Democratic values.

Assuming that Democrats control at least one chamber in 2021, GOP Leadership must understand that no legislation will reach the Governor's desk without collaboration. In turn, the Governor must realize that he will achieve very few of his priorities over the last two years of his term without compromise. While always remaining true to our guiding Democratic principles, collaboration will be the driving force of progress.

Media

To facilitate honest and transparent interaction with the media, this Democratic Caucus Leadership team pledges to hold weekly press conferences during session, highlighting rotating members of the caucus. We will work to create a policy that allows media access to floor and committee proceedings while ensuring decorum and security are considered.

Additionally, this Democratic Caucus Leadership pledges to use its resources and platform to elevate the most important issues and initiatives of the Democratic Caucus members. Our Communication Director and other staff resources will always be available to any member wishing to bring additional attention to the crucial issues facing their constituents.

Decorum, Code of Conduct, and Ethics

After years of promises that the House would put forth a code of conduct and ethics, we are still without a comprehensive or coherent standard. We commit that our leadership team will direct the House Ethics Committee to pass a Code of Conduct and Ethics for the consideration of the full Chamber. This will be an inclusive process that incorporates input from all members of the House and delivers a clear example of how legislators are to conduct the people's business.

Beyond this, if the Democratic Caucus is to set the example of how good government should not only look but how it should work, then we must hold ourselves and each other to even higher standards. Our leadership will put forth the following norms for our caucus:

- Punctual and prepared attendance at meetings, committee hearings, and floor sessions is considered absolutely necessary for effective governance.
- Respectful interaction with all members, employees, and visitors of the House at all times is the example that we should set.
- Open and honest communication between members of our caucus is recognized as essential for collaboration and unity.

This leadership team commits to upholding these norms both for ourselves and for the rest of the caucus.

Our Commitment: Unity in the New Governing Majority

In this document, we have proposed a new and ambitious direction for the House Democratic Caucus. However, these ambitions, policies, and structural changes that we seek can only be achieved by working together in a unified, open, and honest fashion.

The basis for creating what we call the "Unity Caucus" is a simple understanding of and respect for the fact that within our Democratic Caucus, our varied life experiences, worldviews, and constituencies can and will inevitably lead to differences of opinion. It is the resolve of this Leadership Team – and our promise to each member – that we will build a caucus that values diversity of thought and is responsive to every member of the Democratic Caucus.

In closing, we – Diego Espinoza, Jennifer Longdon, and Andrea Dalessandro – humbly seek your vote for leadership of both the Democratic Caucus and the House of Representatives. As we ask not only for your vote but your confidence and trust, it is our commitment to you that, in return, we will fulfill the promises made in this document and truly govern as a Unity Caucus.

Thank you for your friendship, consideration, and support.

In Unity and Solidarity,

Diego Espinoza

Jennifer Longdon

Andrea Dalessandro