

Arizona's Executive Branch

ARIZONA'S EXECUTIVE BRANCH

Governor:

Jan Brewer (R)

Secretary of State:

Ken Bennett (R)

Attorney General:

Tom Horne (R)

Treasurer:

Doug Ducey (R)

Superintendent of Public Instruction:

John Huppenthal (R)

State Mine Inspector:

Joe Hart (R)

Corporation Commission:

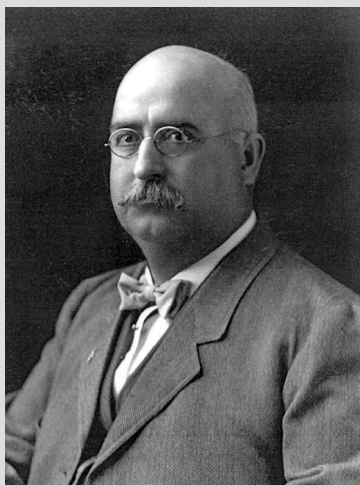
Paul Newman (D)

Gary Pierce (R)

Sandra D. Kennedy (D)

Bob Stump (R)

Brenda Burns (R)



George W. P. Hunt was Arizona's first governor. He was re-elected to office a record seven times.

A plural executive branch—Like most state governments Arizona has a “plural” executive branch. Arizona elects eleven executive branch officials and has dozens of state agencies headed by independent multi-member boards. Under this arrangement no single official is in charge. This contrasts with the national government which has a single elective head (the president) and appointed subordinates. The elected members of the Arizona executive branch (in succession order) are: the governor, secretary of state, attorney general, treasurer, and superintendent of public instruction. Notably, Arizona has no lieutenant governor even though five of the last eight governors inherited their office due to the death or resignation of the governor. A proposal to create such an office—found in nearly all states—was rejected by the voters in 1994 and 2010. In addition to the “big five,” Arizona elects a state mine inspector and a five-person corporation commission. Except for the corporation commissioners (who have staggered terms), the remaining officials are elected to four-year terms in off-presidential even-numbered years (e.g., 2010, 2014, 2018). This means that Arizona’s top officials are elected in low turnout elections skipped by sixty percent or more of the voting age citizens.. Term limits now restrict executive branch officials (other than mine inspector) to two consecutive terms.

The pros and cons of a plural executive branch—The drafters of Arizona’s constitution believed that having multiple elected officials would reduce corruption. (Territorial officials had been notorious for abusing power.) With a plural executive branch no single person has all the power, and multiple elected officials serve as watchdogs over each other. In addition, the voters have control over who heads sensitive departments such as utility regulation, mine safety, and the management of schools. To some degree this plural design has worked. In the past twenty years Arizona has weathered two major gubernatorial crises. Governor Evan Mecham was removed through the impeachment process in 1988 and Governor Fife Symington resigned following a criminal conviction in 1997. Having an independently-elected attorney general benefited the state in both instances. However, critics argue that a plural executive deprives the state of strong leadership. Friction and conflict can result when voters elect officials from different parties. Even officials from the same party do not always work well together—they may be political rivals or simply have different views. A plural branch also tends to reduce accountability because officials can blame each other for inaction or failures. Finally, the voters do not always elect officials with expertise (e.g., treasurers with financial backgrounds; school chiefs with educational experience.)

The governor: first among equals—Arizonans expect their governor to be a forceful leader who can take charge of the bureaucracy and effectively manage the state’s needs. Although the state constitution gives the governor varied powers, nearly all are limited in significant ways. For example, the ability to hire and remove department heads is one way that chief executives control the bureaucracy. However, in Arizona some major departments are off limits because they are controlled by other elected officials (e.g., the department of education). And the governor cannot fire board members who head many important state agencies (e.g., the parole board and most occupational regulatory agencies). Similarly, the governor lacks the power to hire or fire most of the state’s workers who are civil servants. The governor plays a major role in the state’s budget process, but the legislature has the final say. The governor is the commander-in-chief of the state’s militia (National Guard), but the president can nationalize the Guard at any time. The governor can dictate the legislature’s agenda by calling it into a special session, but the legislature is not obligated to enact the legislation sought by the governor and can immediately adjourn. The governor has a veto power over legislation, including the more powerful line-item veto with respect to appropriation bills. However, the legislature can override the governor’s veto with a supermajority vote

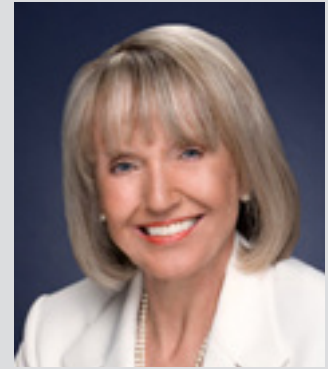
(although this is rarely done). The legislature can also bypass an anticipated veto by sending the measure to the people through the referendum process. (The governor has no veto over any citizen-initiated measures.) The governor has the power to appoint all appellate judges and most superior court judges. However, this is not comparable to the president's power to appoint federal judges: Arizona's governor is forced to appoint from a short list of candidates, state court judges do not serve for life, and state court judges must win periodic retention elections to remain in office. Finally, the governor's clemency powers are also limited. Although the governor can grant reprieves (postponements in the carrying out of criminal sentences), commutations (reductions in sentences) and pardons (full forgiveness) the governor cannot act unless a state board approves clemency first. Additionally, the governor has no power over paroles (early release from prison) which are exclusively controlled by a state board.

Historically, many Arizona governors have been overshadowed by powerful legislative leaders or attorney generals. However, Governor Bruce Babbitt (1978–86) demonstrated that strong political skills, an aggressive use of the veto power, and some luck, can make the governor the dominant person in state government even when the legislature is controlled by the opposing party. The advent of legislative term limits has also helped shift the balance of power from the legislature to the governor. Finally, governors can draw upon various informal powers. For example, the governor is the ceremonial “head of state” and usually attracts the most media coverage. The governor is usually the leader of his/her party. These informal powers can be used to build political support for the governor's agenda. However popularity cuts both ways: loss of public support can undermine a governor's ability to govern (e.g. Evan Mecham).

Notably Arizona has had four female governors in its relatively brief history (Rose Mofford, Jane D. Hull, Janet Napolitano, and Jan Brewer)—a national record. And in 1998 it also made history by electing women to all four of the top executive branch offices.

Other executive branch officials—The secretary of state is the chief elections official and maintains the state's records and laws. This official is next-in-line of succession if something happens to the governor. (Since 1977, four secretary of states have inherited the top office through this means.) Wielding more real power is the attorney general, who serves as the state's top legal advisor. Because the line between legal and policy advice is not clear-cut, attorney generals can significantly influence the operation of state government. The attorney general represents the state in most non-criminal litigation and plays an important, but not exclusive, role in criminal law enforcement. (In Arizona most crimes are initially prosecuted by county attorneys, but the attorney general has supervisory powers and handles criminal appeals.) The treasurer is the top financial officer and collects, safeguards, and invests the state's funds. The superintendent of public instruction manages the department of education which oversees the state's K–12 schools and certifies its teachers. However, the superintendent's authority is undercut by other officials and bodies that participate in school governance (e.g., the state board of education, locally elected school boards, school superintendents, and county superintendents). Arizona *elects* a state mine inspector because the constitution's drafters feared that governors would appoint industry-friendly officials. The same rationale—mistrust of corporate influence—caused the framers to create an elected Corporation Commission. This body, (which recently expanded from three members to five), regulates public service corporations—the utility companies that provide gas, electricity, water, telephone and similar services. Because most of these businesses are monopolies, the commission determines the maximum rates they can charge and monitors the service that they provide. The corporation commission also licenses private corporations and securities issued in Arizona.

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Governor Jan Brewer
2009-present

Major State Agencies:

- AHCCCS
- Administration (DOA)
- Attorney General
- Corrections (DOC)
- Economic Security (DES)
- Education
- Environmental Quality (DEQ)
- Health Services (DHS)
- Juvenile Corrections
- Revenue
- Transportation (DOT)

Major State Boards and Commissions:

- Accountancy
- Barbers
- Chiropractic Examiners
- Cosmetology
- Dental Examiners
- Education
- Executive Clemency
- Funeral Directors and Embalmers
- Industrial Commission
- Medical Examiners
- Nursing
- Opticians
- Parks
- Pharmacy
- School Facilities
- Regents (universities)
- Veterinary Medical Examiners

Governor:
<http://www.azgovernor.gov/>

Secretary of State:
<http://www.azsos.gov/>

Attorney General :
<http://www.azag.gov/>

Treasurer:
<http://www.aztreasury.gov/>

School Superintendent:
<http://www.ade.state.az.us/>

Corporation Commission:
<http://www.azcc.gov/default.asp>

Arizona government homepage:
<http://az.gov/webapp/portal/>