

**School District Redistricting Commission**

**Recommendations to the  
Governor of Arizona**  
The Honorable Janet Napolitano

December 21, 2007

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SDRC

# Introduction

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This is the final report of Arizona school unification from the School District Redistricting Commission (SDRC) to the Governor and other notable state leadership as provided by Laws 2005, chapter 191, hereinafter SB 1068, for the purposes of having each school superintendent in a county with a school district that is affected by the proposed school district unification plan call an election of all qualified voters within the boundaries of the proposed unified school district to be held at the next general election in November 2008 to adopt the boundaries as proposed by the commission. SB 1068 specifically provides for ballot language as follows:

**Do you support the unification of the (insert name of school district affected), a political subdivision of the state of Arizona, to become a unified school district to provide instruction in preschool programs for pupils with disabilities and in kindergarten and grades one through twelve? Yes ( ) No ( )**

**A yes vote shall have the effect of approving the unification of the \_\_\_\_\_ school district.**

**A no vote shall have the effect of denying the unification of the \_\_\_\_\_ school district.**

**If the election pursuant to subsection A of this section is to create a unified district that does not follow current boundaries of a common or high school district or if the unification is for more than one district affected, the election ballot shall contain the following language:**

**Do you support the unification of the (insert names of school districts affected), as political subdivisions of the state of Arizona, to become a unified school district to provide instruction in preschool programs for pupils with disabilities and in kindergarten and grades one through twelve? Yes ( ) No ( )**

**A yes vote shall have the effect of approving the unification of the (insert names of school districts affected) into the (name of proposed unified school district).**

**A no vote shall have the effect of denying the unification of the (insert names of school districts affected) into the (name of proposed unified school district).**

The Arizona School Redistricting Commission was created by SB 1068 and is required to unify “all school districts in this state. . .that serve students in at least all grades from kindergarten through grade twelve, unless the commission determines otherwise.” See Laws 2005, chapter 191, sec. 3, sub. F, par. 8, subd. (a).

Since the formation of the Commission, it has researched the issues connected to unification, held community discussions and several public hearings around the state, utilized cutting edge technology tools through ASU’s Decision Theater, attended education sessions with groups such as the Arizona Auditor General’s office. Additionally, individual commissioners have visited districts across the state, attended meetings, held discussions with key school and public groups and invited the public and others to attend commission hearings to provide input.

Of the current 227<sup>1</sup> Arizona school districts, the focus was on 108 elementary school districts and 15 union districts. In April 2007, initial proposals for school unification K-12 were developed and sent

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<sup>1</sup> The 227 school districts include 9 Accommodation Districts, 56 Elementary Districts located within the 15 High School Districts, 50 Elementary Districts not within High School Districts, and 97 Unified school Districts. This number does not include the 11 Joint Technological and Education Districts (JTEDs) for a total of 238 school districts.

to 92 school district administrators and school boards for feedback and input. The Commission asserts that out of all the eligible districts for unification consideration, the school districts that were impacted by the initial plans showed potential for unification. Some of the 92 districts impacted received two options or proposals for unification, while others received only one proposal. The Commission also determined that in some cases – primarily for reasons that include district positioning in rural areas and distance between those with expansive undeveloped land areas/mountain regions – certain districts were not considered for unification at this time.

The SDRC mailed the governing boards of the affected districts preliminary reports on the proposed school district unification plans by April 30, 2007. Their feedback on the plans was requested by July 30, 2007. But due to requests for additional time for review of the plans from the governing boards, the legislature extended the date for final response to September 15, 2007 through Laws 2007, chapter 283, section 5. The Commission requested district leadership to update the data sheets provided to them and also invited the school board to provide an official response as well as inviting any individual board member to submit ideas. Of those 92 districts, 70 sent in feedback received by the Department of Education by the September 15<sup>th</sup> deadline.

As the school district responses were received, the Commission analyzed the feedback and revisited previous findings and discussion from the past two years of work. Additionally, it continued to request legal council and input on the various plans and many details involved in school systems, districts and unification. The Commission then voted on whether to put a plan forward for voters to consider in an election called for November 2008.

The following plans are respectfully submitted for unification by county:

Number of Current Districts Affected: 76

Number of New Districts Proposed: 27

Total Number of Students in Proposed Districts: 331,733.216<sup>2</sup>

- Cochise County: 8 districts involved
  - District A
    - Ash Creek Elementary District
    - Double Adobe Elementary District
    - Elfrida Elementary District
    - McNeal Elementary District
    - Pearce Elementary District
    - Rucker Elementary District<sup>3</sup>
    - Valley Union High School District
  - District B
    - Palominas Elementary District

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<sup>2</sup> Average Daily Membership (ADM) for Fiscal Year 2006-2007

<sup>3</sup> Transportation district—A district not defined in statute, that is an organized school district which transports all of its students to neighboring school districts

- La Paz County: 3 districts involved
  - District A
    - Salome Consolidated Elementary District
    - Wenden Elementary District
    - Bicentennial Union High School District
  
- Maricopa County Central: 14 districts involved
  - District A
    - Alhambra Elementary
    - Balsz Elementary
    - Cartwright Elementary
    - Creighton Elementary
    - Isaac Elementary
    - Laveen Elementary
    - Madison Elementary
    - Murphy Elementary
    - Osborn Elementary
    - Phoenix Elementary
    - Riverside Elementary
    - Roosevelt Elementary
    - Wilson Elementary
    - Phoenix Union High School
  
- Maricopa County East Valley: 3 districts involved
  - District A
    - Kyrene Elementary District
    - Tempe Elementary District
    - Tempe Union High School District
  
- Maricopa County North Central: 3 districts involved
  - District A
    - Glendale Elementary District
    - Washington Elementary District
    - Glendale Union High School District
  
- Maricopa County West Valley: 14 districts involved
  - District A
    - Arlington Elementary District
    - Buckeye Elementary District
    - Liberty Elementary District
    - Palo Verde Elementary District
    - Buckeye Union High School District
  - District B
    - Fowler Elementary District

- Littleton Elementary District
    - Pendergast Elementary District
    - Tolleson Elementary District
    - Union Elementary District
    - Tolleson Union High School District
  - District C
    - Avondale Elementary District
    - Litchfield Elementary District
    - Agua Fria Union High School District
- Mohave County: 3 districts involved
  - District A
    - Bullhead City Elementary District
    - Colorado River Union High School District
  - District B
    - Mohave Valley Elementary District
    - Colorado River Union High School District
- Pima County: 1 district involved
  - District A
    - Altar Valley Elementary District
- Pinal County: 9 districts involved
  - District A
    - Oracle Elementary District
  - District B
    - Casa Grande Elementary District
    - Casa Grande Union High School District
  - District C
    - Eloy Elementary District
    - Santa Cruz Valley Unified High School District
  - District D
    - Stanfield Elementary District
    - Casa Grande Union High School District
  - District E
    - Toltec Elementary District
    - Casa Grande Union High School District
  - District F
    - Picacho Elementary District
    - Santa Cruz Valley Union High School District
  - District G
    - Red Rock Elementary District
    - Santa Cruz Valley Union High School District
- Santa Cruz County: 4 districts involved

- District A
  - Patagonia Elementary District
  - Patagonia Union High School District
- District B
  - Empire Elementary District<sup>4, 5</sup>
  - Sonoita Elementary District
- Yavapai County: 6 districts involved
  - District A
    - Cottonwood-Oak Creek Elementary District
    - Mingus Union High School District
  - District B
    - Hillside Elementary District
    - Kirkland Elementary District
    - Skull Valley Elementary District
    - Yarnell Elementary District
- Yuma County: 8 districts involved
  - District A
    - Mohawk Valley Elementary District
    - Wellton Elementary District
    - Antelope Union High School District
  - District B
    - Yuma Elementary District
    - Yuma Union High School District
  - District C
    - Crane Elementary District
    - Somerton Elementary District
    - Yuma Union High School District
  - District D
    - Gadsden Elementary District
    - Yuma Union High School District

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<sup>4</sup> Transportation district—A district not defined in statute, that is an organized school district which transports all of its students to neighboring school districts

<sup>5</sup> In Pima County

The task to review Arizona's long history and evolution of education and the formation of school districts was significant. The Commission members spent countless hours reviewing the issues, travelling throughout Arizona to meet with people, and engaged in the difficult work of making the best choice to provide voters an opportunity to consider unification as one option toward aligned curriculum, reinvested dollars into the classroom and student achievement. Many assisted the Commission in its work and we would like to officially thank those people for their support:

- Senator Linda Gray (R), District 10
- Tom Horne, Superintendent of Public Instruction
- Gretchen Kitchel – Pinnacle West Capital Corporation
- Legislative Counsel – Ken Behringer, Todd Bane, Liz Douglas, Steve Schimmp
- Rhonda Bannard – Inspired Connections, Inc.
- ASU's Decision Theater - Dr. Dierdre Hahn, Joe Adams, Rick Shangraw, Nettie Klinger, Ron Russell
- Department of Education Staff – Marlene Johnson, Liz Tuttle, Jackie Jones, Lyle Friesen
- Legislative staff – Michael Hunter, Brian Lockery, Dawn Wallace

This report is respectfully submitted by the School Redistricting Commission for consideration by you, the Honorable Governor Janet Napolitano.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Mr. Martin L. Shultz, Commission Chairman, VP Government Affairs, Pinnacle West Capital Corporation, former teacher and administrator

Ms. Vicki Anderson, retired teacher/school librarian

Mr. Jay Blanchard, ASU College of Education, former state legislator

Dr. Sandra Dowling, Maricopa County School Superintendent

Ms. Doris Goodale, President, Kingman Unified School District (Mohave Co.)

Mr. Art Harding, Arizona Department of Education

Mr. Jay Kaprosy, Senior Government Relations Advisor, Steptoe & Johnson, former Legislative Liaison for the Superintendent of Public Instruction

Ms. Rita Leyva, Chief Deputy, Yavapai County Education Service Agency

Ms. Susan Bitter Smith, Executive Director, AZ-NM Cable Telecommunications Association

Mr. Dave Naugle, Corporate Public Affairs, Southwest Gas Corporation, governing board member, Sonoita Elementary School District #25

Mayor Thomas Schoaf, business owner, Mayor of Litchfield Park, former board member of Litchfield Elementary School District

Mr. Kent Scribner, Superintendent, Isaac School District

Mr. Joseph Thomas, teacher, Mesa Unified School District

# Executive Department of Arizona Office of Governor

This Final Report, pursuant to Laws 2005, chapter 191, was received by the Governor this

\_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_

at \_\_\_\_\_ o'clock \_\_\_\_\_ M.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Secretary to the Governor

Accepted this \_\_\_\_\_ day of

\_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_

at \_\_\_\_\_ o'clock \_\_\_\_\_ M.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Governor of Arizona

# Appendices

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## **Appendix 1: Unification Plans**

Includes a map, a flow chart depicting which districts/schools would unify if voters were to approve the plan, and facts specific to each of those areas – including ADM, special education, teacher experience index, maintenance and operations, average teacher salaries, demographic breakdowns and other details.

*Attachment A: Approved Redistricting Plans*

## **Appendix 2: Facts and Figures**

Letters to governing boards requesting feedback, a list of impacted counties and districts that responded, ADM and Career Ladders at a glance for all affected districts, and other relevant district characteristics.

*Attachment A: First letter to governing boards requesting feedback on the proposed unification plans*

*Attachment B: Second letter to governing boards extending the deadline for feedback*

*Attachment C: Summary of governing boards that submitted feedback on proposed unification plans*

*Attachment D: 100<sup>th</sup> Day Average Daily Membership (ADM)*

## **Appendix 3: Frequently Asked Questions**

A comprehensive outline of the many issues involved in unification, legal findings, and other clarifications.

*Attachment A: Frequently Asked Questions*

## **Appendix 4: Arizona Auditor General's Report**

Includes excerpts from the *Arizona Public School Districts' Dollars Spent in the Classroom, Fiscal Year 2006* and one-page information sheets on each affected individual school district.

*Attachment A: Excerpts from the Auditor General's Executive Summary*

*Attachment B: One-page information sheets on each affected individual school district*

## **Appendix 5: Financial Analysis**

Anticipated Impact of Unification on Districts: Potential tax rate impact calculations.

*Attachment A: Tax Rate Impact Calculations*

*Attachment B: List of affected districts with Career Ladder programs*

*Attachment C: Override Information and District Characteristics*

## **Appendix 6: Anticipated Impact on State General Fund**

Potential change in Career Ladder funding and Small School Weight funding.

*Attachment A: Estimated State Fiscal Impact of Proposed School District Unifications*

*Attachment B: Small School Weights v. Small School Adjustments*

**Appendix 7: Elections**

Anticipated cost of elections to each impacted county/district.

*Attachment A: Cost of Elections*

**Appendix 8: Potential Legislation**

Suggested considerations for future legislation that might help improve and advance the efforts of unification, student achievement, teacher support and other related issues.

*Attachment A: Suggested Legislation*

**Appendix 9: Statutory Authority**

Statutes creating and giving direction to the SDRC.

*Attachment A: SB 1068*

*Attachment B: SB 1164*

(All handouts provided to Commissioners, meeting minutes, Governing School Board responses and additional information about the School District Redistricting Commission are on file with the Arizona State Library, Archives and Public Records. Audio recordings, meeting minutes, and attachments on file in the Secretary of Senate's Office/Resource Center, Room 115.)