



A strong democracy is fundamental to a prosperous Arizona economy, and at the Arizona Secretary of State's Office, we serve every Arizonan every day — by safeguarding the principles that ensure our economy thrives and protecting transparency and accountability — the cornerstones of our democratic process.

Now our state stands at a pivotal moment — where the necessity to modernize our services meets an undeniable return on investment for every Arizonan. As we prepare for 2025-2026, it is clear that we cannot afford to backslide or allow outdated systems to hinder our progress. We must ensure that Arizona keeps pace to provide the reliable services our citizens deserve.

Stewarding democracy isn't a political ideal; it's a critical driver of economic success and the foundation upon which innovation and growth are built, just as this budget proposal is not only about funding — it's about investing in the tools and systems that will propel us forward and ensure that Arizona remains a leader in democracy and economic prosperity.

Our Commitment: Achievements that Strengthen Arizona

In the past year, our office has worked tirelessly to deliver on our promises, ensuring that our state remains a champion of service to all Arizonans. A selection of those accomplishments include:

- *Strengthening County Partnerships:* We conducted comprehensive cyber and physical security reviews and readiness trainings and a focus on implementation of election administration best practices, extending this expertise to all 15 Arizona counties. Our office also collaborated extensively with counties to use federal ARPA funds for creating and implementing an election fellowship program, and we implemented text-message ballot tracking and ballot curing statewide.
- *Enhancing Business Services:* We reopened in-person service windows in Phoenix and Tucson, improved telephone “first time resolution” and digitized hundreds of thousands of business filings.
- *Implementing and Promoting Business One-Stop:* We tirelessly advocated to prevent the elimination of Business One-Stop and collaborated with ADOA to complete Phase I & II buildout and launch. At the direction of our prestigious Business Advisory Committee, we also began an outreach and promotion effort to connect with and better serve business-services customers statewide by partnering with small businesses, economic development and business formation groups.
- *Preserving our Past for the Future:* As Chair of the Arizona American 250 Commission, I am leading efforts to plan, develop and coordinate the commemoration of the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States, an effort that will drive civic engagement and generate economic activity. We also secured crucial funding to establish a Trusted Electronic Records Repository, taking a significant step forward in preserving Arizona's public records and renewing our commitment to transparency and access.

- *Sustaining the Address Confidentiality Program (ACP):* We secured funding for Fiscal Year 2025 through one-time grants, ensuring continued protection for survivors of domestic violence. Our goal remains to create a permanent funding source for this vital program.

To see more accomplishments, please see our [Annual Report](#).

Priorities for a Stronger Arizona: Our Future ROI

As we look to the future, we are focused on several key priorities that will ensure Arizona continues to lead in democracy, business and governance:

1. Modernizing & Right-Sizing: Accountability, Transparency, and Efficiency

Modernizing and right-sizing our services ensures a strong democracy and a thriving economy. Innovation in business flourishes where governance is transparent, and our efforts to modernize these systems are essential to maintaining that transparency.

- **Election Management System/Election Night Reporting:** The Election Management System/Election Night Reporting system is the backbone of our election-night website reporting, tallying up information and providing Arizonans with timely results. However, this website, built in-house in 2016-2017, is maintained by a single expert due to its outdated technology. To ensure that Arizonans continue to receive reliable election results, we must invest in modernizing this system to make it easier to maintain and more resilient for the future.
- **Campaign Finance System:** Arizona’s campaign finance system is a critical tool for maintaining the transparency and accountability that our state demands. Unfortunately, the current system is outdated and unreliable. We need a modernized system that allows every Arizonan to easily access and understand who is funding our politicians. This is not just a technical upgrade; it is an investment in the trust and integrity that underpin our democratic process.
- **Election Fellowship:** In 2024, one-time federal funding enabled us to launch the County Election Administration Fellowship Program, offering college students and recent graduates a five-month opportunity to work with county election officials across the state, gaining hands-on experience in the democratic process while supporting secure and accessible elections. Continued funding is crucial to developing a new generation of trained election officials who will help ensure the integrity of our elections for years to come.
- **Off-Year Elections Costs:** Historically, the AZSOS received funding solely for general and primary election expenses in odd-numbered fiscal years. However, recent changes to election processes and timelines have introduced significant costs in even-numbered fiscal years as well. Securing funding for these off-year elections is essential to ensure that our election processes remain seamless and effective throughout the entire election cycle.

2. Business Services: The Government Easy Button

- **Business One-Stop:** The Business One Stop (B1S) portal is a vital resource for Arizona’s business community. The AZSOS seeks to assume ownership, management and promotion of B1S to continue to provide a secure, efficient platform that supports Arizona’s economic growth.
- **Modernize and Secure IT Infrastructure:** The AZSOS’s IT infrastructure; especially that supporting the Business Services division, harkens from a time when the agency used paper records. Many components are, at best, outdated, and, at worst, obsolete. Upgrading this infrastructure is essential to keep government operations aligned with the fast pace of business and ensure seamless service delivery.

3. Celebrating 250 Years of Democracy: A Historic Opportunity

As we approach the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, Arizona has a unique opportunity to lead in commemorating this milestone through the America 250 initiative. Our admission as the 48th state not only completed the contiguous U.S., but also added a rich tapestry of cultural heritage and economic strength. This is not just a celebration of our past — it's a powerful reminder of the values that continue to guide us. Arizona's participation in this historic event ensures that our state takes its rightful place in this national celebration of democracy and continues building a strong legacy.

4. Ensuring a Smooth Transition for ACP: Securing Permanent Funding

The Address Confidentiality Program (ACP) plays a vital role in protecting survivors of domestic violence, providing them with the security and anonymity they need to rebuild their lives. While we have successfully secured one-time grants for FY25, ensuring the program's immediate continuation, our long-term goal is to establish a permanent funding source. This transition to stable, ongoing funding is critical to guarantee that the ACP remains a reliable and enduring resource for those who depend on it.

The Path Forward: Serving Arizonans and Arizona Businesses

At the heart of our work is our commitment to the people of Arizona — ensuring that our economy runs smoothly, our democratic processes remain transparent and accountable, and our state continues to thrive. Arizona's unique place in our nation's history comes with the responsibility to lead by example, embracing our role on the frontlines of democracy and business.

Our goal is clear: to make government work for every Arizonan, to foster an environment where government and businesses find synergy and to safeguard the democratic processes that are the foundation of our state.

We ask for your partnership in advancing these critical initiatives, recognizing that together we can build a stronger, more prosperous Arizona. Your thoughtful consideration and support of these budget priorities are not just investments in the Secretary of State's Office — they are investments in the future of every Arizonan.

I thank my staff, elections volunteers, and those stewards who dedicate their time to something that is bigger than ourselves, and thank you for your continued support and dedication to the people of Arizona.

Sincerely,



Adrian Fontes

Arizona Secretary of State