



Holiday Greetings

Shining a bright light for socially-just public policy in Arizona
December 17, 2015. All opinions are those of the author, Anne L. Schneider.

A Project of Unitarian Universalist Justice Arizona and the Valley Unitarian Universalist Congregation

December 22, 2015



What's happening to Arizona's Children? Usually, when the legislature is not in session, our elected representatives do not make headlines. Last week was different, as the Joint Legislative Budget Committee took issue with the Department of Child Safety. Does this mean more attention to children in Arizona? [Read on...](#)



Mark Your Calendars!

Monday, Jan. 11 – opening session at the Legislature. There will be a rally sponsored by numerous advocacy groups to support women's rights, 11 to 1 on the Capitol steps. You can register on site! Join with women and men from all over Arizona. Let them know we care!

Sunday, Jan. 24 – Training & orientation for the UU Day at the Legislature for the central Arizona UU congregations and guests (metro Phoenix). Scheduled from 1 to 2:30, this session will enable UUs and co-participants to



- Meet with others from your own legislative district.
- Get some tips on "building a relationship with your legislator," from Prof. Anne Schneider and Rep. Celeste Plumlee, VUU member and newly appointed member of the House.
- Hear from Joe Rubio, Valley Interfaith Project, on the crisis facing education in Arizona.
- Craft a message, get organized, select a "captain" for your LD and get ready for the UU Day at the Legislature.
- Enjoy some really good homemade snacks!!

- Sign ups will be appreciated . Sign up at legislativeadvocacy@vuu.org Name, e-mail, address, legislative district (if you know it, otherwise, no problem).

February 15, Monday – President’s day! UU Day at the Legislature 9:30 to 3:30 at the State Capitol. Let’s send a powerful, state-wide message about UU values and our vision for socially just public policy in Arizona!

February 27. Saturday – Half-day workshop at VUU on “Race and Poverty.” More information later. Open to all who are concerned about racism and poverty.

Legislature Expecting More for Arizona’s Children?



Last week, the Joint Legislative Budget committee took the unusual action of giving the Department of Child Safety an “unfailing” grade, rather than the customary “favorable review” that most agencies get after their pre-session meeting with legislators.

You may recall that DCS is the new agency created by the legislature with some infusion of funds in 2014 for the explicit purpose of reducing and then eliminating the backlog of uninvestigated child abuse reports. This is the agency that acknowledged in 2013 that more than 15,000 cases of child abuse (some of which had multiple reports) had not been investigated—in fact, had not even been reviewed much less had a case worker actually contact the family or the person giving the report.

The director was fired; the agency was moved out of the Department of Economic Security into its own independent agency in an attempt to give greater oversight; and additional \$60 million was provided to hire more case workers and reduce the backlog.

According to the testimony at the hearing Tuesday, this has not happened. And, some are questioning the leadership of the new director, including the fact that he did not personally attend the hearing to answer their questions but sent an assistant instead.

This may be an important wake-up call that could lead to some improvement in Arizona’s child care system. On the other hand, this kind of anger at an agency can become an excuse to cut budgets, and instead of fixing problems, making things even worse.

Stay tuned. Children’s issues will be big in the next legislative session. Read more about this

issue:

<https://mail.google.com/mail/#inbox/151ac9ec985dcf49> Sen. Farley's Report

[Howie Fischer in the Arizona Daily Star](#) –.

[KJZZ-FM Radio](#)

[Mary Jo Pitzl in the Arizona Republic](#)

<http://servicearizona.com/voterRegistration?popularclick>



Automatic voter registration for Arizona? Sen. Andrew Sherman, Tempe, says he will introduce this year another bill in the Arizona legislature that will make it easier for Arizonans to register to vote. This is part of a continuing effort by several Legislators to increase voting turnout, that was at an abysmal low (47%) in the 2014 off-year elections. He introduced the legislation last year, when he was a member of the House of Representatives, but it did not even get a hearing in a committee and was not even assigned to a committee until the last day of the session as a pro forma measure. (All bills have to be assigned to a committee by leadership. But if they do not want a bill to get a hearing, it is not even assigned until the last day and then is assigned to the rules committee where it is not heard). Other states have begun to pass automatic voter registration legislation in an effort to increase voting participation.

It is not particularly difficult in Arizona to register to vote, as it can be done on-line if a person has an Arizona driver's license or a non operating Arizona ID. But it could still be easier, such as permitting "same day" registration or automatic registration where the state actually reaches out to people with the forms and even the ballots that can be submitted at the same time.

Chances of passage are slim, but there may be more support for this in 2016 than in the past.



Contact

Valley Interfaith Project Legislative Kickoff! VIP will held two sessions for leaders to "get organized" for advocacy in the 2016 Legislative Session. Each will emphasize school funding, prison reform, poverty, and the state budget. legislativeadvocacy@vuuu.org if you are interested and able to attend!

- January 7 (Thursday) 6 to 9 p.m. Paradise Valley Methodist Church, 4455 E. Lincoln Dr.
- January 9 (Saturday) 8:30 to 1. Paradise Valley Methodist Church, 4455 E. Lincoln Drive.

New Member of Arizona's House of Representatives



Celeste Plumlee, a long-time UU and member of the Valley Unitarian Universalist Congregation was sworn in as the newest member of the Arizona Legislature last week. She was named by the Maricopa Board of Supervisors to take the seat held by Andrew Sherman who was appointed to the Senate, taking the seat previously held by Ed Ableser, who resigned to

take a position in higher education in Nevada. Here's a good story about Celeste's legislative priorities. <http://azcapitoltimes.com/news/2015/12/18/celeste-plumlee-new-lawMAKER-advocating-for-liberal-changes/>



Happy Happy Happy Holidays

May you have much to look forward to with hope. Good wishes to all



10:30. You are welcome here!

Senior Minister, Rev. Andy Burnette; Music Minister, Rev. Kellie Walker; Director of Life-Span Religious Education, Marci Bedouin. Administrator, Sue Ringler. Located: 6400 W. Del Rio Drive, Chandler, AZ 480 899 4249
www.vuu.org For previous copies of the *Arizona Legislative Alert*, go to <https://www.vuu.org/legislative-advocacy>. VUU holds services each Sunday at



Executive Director Rev. Lisa McDaniel-Hutchings; Justice Coordinator Katy Resendiz; Policy Coordinator, Anne L. Schneider. Board Members, UUJAZ: Sharon Travis, Liz Swan (Chair), Bruce Celiz-Hagen, Rev. Matthew Crary, www.uujaz.org. Congregational contacts: