

# News From The States

# EVENING WRAP

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By [Kate Queram](#)

I know it is useless to compare politicians to people with actual jobs, but I can't resist it, because there is no better way to understand the absurdity of our government than by imagining a normal human employee acting like a leading Republican official. What if you ran around [for three years](#) yelling that your coworker [stole your lunch](#) when it was [very clear](#) that you [actually just lost it](#) on your way to the office? What if you [refused to do your work](#) but expected to keep getting paid anyway? What if you got a promotion and immediately used your new role to [rig the hiring process](#) so that other jobs could only go to your friends? *You would be fired.* (You would probably also not have many friends, because you sound kind of awful.)

This is not the case in politics, for a lot of reasons that have a lot to do with things like gerrymandering and [voter suppression](#) and [packing the judiciary](#) with sympathetic sycophants. The result is a system that rewards extremism and encourages moronic behavior from the small group of people entrusted with running the most powerful nation in the world. From a content perspective, this is great. For the country, not so much.



## The Big Takeaway

Behavior among a certain set of Republicans has deteriorated noticeably since

2015, when Donald Trump descended the golden escalator and [described Mexican immigrants](#) as criminals and rapists. (This was astonishing [at the time](#). He apparently [said it again](#) in 2018. I didn't notice.) By last January, [most of the party](#) had embraced Trump's [repeated lies](#) about the 2020 election.



*Gotta do it to get through it.  
(Photo by Stephen Maturen/Getty Images)*

**Few lawmakers have faced consequences for their conduct**, but plenty of others have suffered for it — including election workers, who [have faced](#) unprecedented harassment and threats from voters who believe Trump's repeated assertions that widespread fraud cost him a second term in the White House. The increasingly hostile environment has driven droves of experienced people from the profession, election officials said Wednesday at a U.S. Senate hearing covered [by our bureau in D.C.](#)

“As a former county recorder myself, I can attest that the pre-2020 world for election administrators is gone,” said Adrian Fontes, Arizona’s secretary of state. “We don’t feel safe in our work because of the harassment and threats that are based in lies.”

Since 2020, 12 of the state’s 15 counties have lost their chief election official,

Fontes said. More than 50 top local officials resigned in Pennsylvania over that same time period, leaving inexperienced workers in charge of an election system where any small, honest mistake can morph into a new conspiracy theory. It's a self-feeding cycle that begins and ends with outrage, making it nearly impossible to recruit or retain employees, said Al Schmidt, Pennsylvania's secretary of the commonwealth.

"[Inexperienced leaders] are more likely to make errors, and make errors in an environment where everything is perceived as being intentional and malicious and seeking to change the outcome of the election," he said. "It almost defies common sense that we have people who want to get into these jobs."



*Help wanted. (Or not.)*  
*(Photo by Kyle Phillips for the Oklahoma Voice)*

**An equally unappealing job: Overseeing the Department of Education in Oklahoma.** That's according to Katherine Curry, who resigned as the state's education secretary after just three months because the department refused to provide the financial documents needed to perform the job, [per the Oklahoma Voice](#).

"When you're responsible for something, you want to know details," Curry said.

“That’s all I can say. I just needed information. ... I never received information.”

As education secretary, Curry was charged with approving any department expenses over \$25,000. The agency furnished records of those high-dollar expenditures but balked when she requested other documents, including monthly fiscal reports and the annual budget. A spokesman blamed the situation on a lack of financial oversight that began in the previous administration, leaving the department without comprehensive records to answer Curry’s questions.

Curry said she became interested in the agency’s finances in June, when state auditors released [a report](#) showing that \$1 million was misspent from a separate fund overseen by State Superintendent Ryan Walters before he took office. Days later, Curry requested records to “help me understand financials,” according to emails. The agency’s chief financial officer promised to provide the requested documents by July 11 but never sent them; when Curry followed up, she was told that Walters wanted to talk to her about the request. But he did not respond to multiple calls and texts.



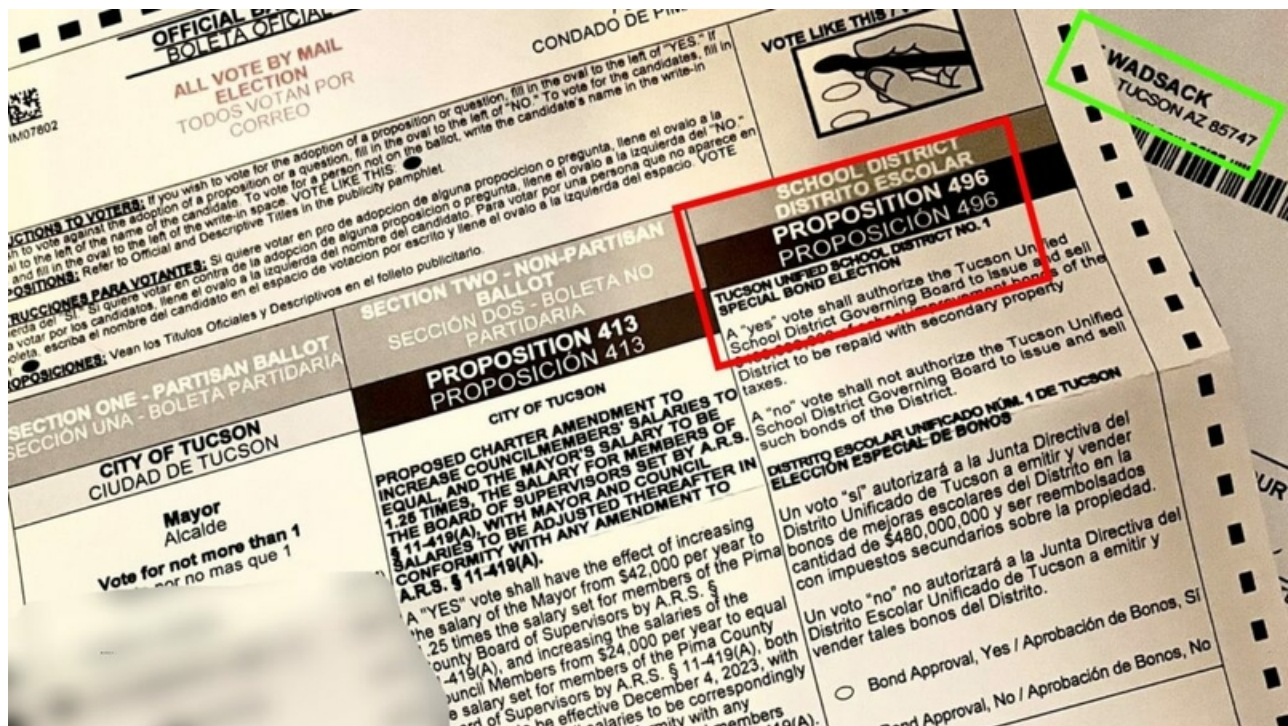
*Not an Oklahoma Department of Education photo.  
(Photo by Getty Images)*

On July 20, Curry followed up via email. Walters did not respond, and she resigned five days later. Gov. Kevin Stitt has still not named a replacement,

though a spokeswoman said he “ is committed to transparent operations within government and continues to seek ways to hold all agencies accountable to the Oklahoma taxpayers.”

**Other employees left the department for similar reasons.** Last week, the agency’s program manager for grant development and compliance [resigned](#), saying a lack of access to information and difficulties obtaining document approval from Walters had “severely hindered” her ability to do the job. A longtime grant writer [resigned in May](#) over similar concerns.

**Certain records seemed a little too available in Arizona** on Monday, when a state senator posted a photo of a ballot she claimed was hers — except, based on the ballot, it couldn’t be hers. That’s because the ballot contained a bond referendum for the Tucson Unified School District, and that district is not where state Sen. Justine Wadsack is registered to vote, [per the Arizona Mirror](#).



Someone’s ballot, IDK.  
(Photo via the Arizona Mirror)

**The Pima County Recorder’s Office confirmed the awkward truth in an email**, verifying that Wadsack was sent “the correct ballot that corresponds with the address on her voter registration card.” There is literally no reason why “a voter who lives at that address” would have received a ballot “with a Tucson Unified School District proposition,” the office added.

Wadsack, a Tucson Republican, [uploaded the photo](#) on social media for voters to use as a guide to fill out their own ballots. But the thread quickly devolved after a local journalist pointed out the discrepancy and asked whose ballot was in the photo.

“That is my ballot. Full stop!” [Wadsack said](#) before accusing the journalist of “badgering” her, calling him an “uneducated bully” who knows “nothing about elections,” and encouraging him to “go investigate” the county recorder and “hold the Democrat elections department accountable” for any “wrongdoing” it uncovers. She never got around to explaining whose ballot she’d photographed and did not respond to multiple email requests for comment, possibly because she was too busy [visiting Mar-A-Lago](#) and reposting [right-wing fever-dream “documentaries”](#) about election fraud.

**Which leaves us with many unanswered questions.** Whose ballot is it? (Best guess: A family member who lives in the district, in the house where Wadsack also resided until 2022.) Does Wadsack know whose ballot it is? Does she really think it’s hers? If so, will she apologize for accusing a journalist of not understanding something she herself did not understand? Does she know that paying city taxes does *not* actually [allow her to vote](#) on school district issues, because city taxes do not fund school districts in Arizona? (Does she know that she voted in favor of the budget that *does* fund Arizona schools?) Perhaps most importantly, does she realize that posting a photo of someone else’s ballot is [a Class 2 misdemeanor](#) under [Arizona law](#), which carries a punishment of a \$750 fine and up to four months in jail?

I don’t know. Kind of seems like she should know at least some of that, though.

“If it is her own ballot and she puts it on the internet, as stupid as it is, it’s not a violation,” said attorney Tom Ryan. “If I take someone else’s and do that, then it is illegal.”

The Pima County Attorney’s Office said it was aware of the situation, but did not immediately respond when asked what, if any, action it might take in response. My guess is probably nothing, based on everything we’ve already discussed today and also on the fact that no one has ever been prosecuted for breaking this particular law, according to Ryan and also my best attempts at Google sleuthing.

Maybe that’ll change this time, Ryan mused.

“I think if you post somebody’s else’s [ballot], that [law] should have some teeth,” he said.

**Should, but probably won’t:** [‘Insurrection’ clause’s Civil War-era history scrutinized in third day of Colorado Trump trial ... Florida Attorney General Ashley Moody on abortion-rights initiative: A ‘misleading’ bid to ‘hoodwink’ voters ... U.S. Sen. Rick Scott \(R-Fla.\) endorses Trump over DeSantis for president ... Indiana Supreme Court reprimands Rokita over televised abortion doctor comments, in split decision ... Majority of likely GOP caucusgoers in Iowa disagree with Trump’s abortion comments ... U.S. House turns aside attempt to censure Michigan’s Rashida Tlaib over Israel remarks ... New Jersey GOP sues group boosting third-party candidates ... North Carolina Supreme Court hears arguments in Confederate monument case ... Veteran North Carolina State Auditor issues stern warning, announces she will not seek re-election ... U.S. Rep. Jim Jordan \(R-Ohio\) issues warning to AG investigating conservative donor ... Voting rights advocates blast Virginia Gov. Glenn Youngkin admin over error affecting 3,400](#)



## Caught Our Eye

A group of parents filed [a federal lawsuit](#) Thursday accusing New Jersey health officials of keeping newborn babies’ blood for 23 years without their parents’ consent in violation of their rights under the Fourth and Fourteenth Amendments, [the New Jersey Monitor reported](#).



*Off to a 23-year shelf life.  
(Photo by Getty Images)*

The blood is collected in a routine heel-prick shortly after birth in order to screen for diseases, but the samples are then stored in an undisclosed location for an undisclosed purpose. The program came to light last year after the state Office of the Public Defender discovered police had used a newborn blood spot to charge the child's father in a 1996 crime. The state refused to reveal how it used blood spots even in response to public records requests.

A spokeswoman for the state health department declined to comment.



## From The Newsrooms

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- [Top Maryland Democrats mobilizing to compete for U.S. Rep. John Sarbanes' seat, while GOP sees opportunity](#)
- [As industry struggles, federal, state offshore wind goals could get tougher to meet](#)



- [‘Broken system’: Call center backlogs impede Missouri families seeking food assistance](#)
- [Idaho has obtained lethal injection chemicals. But state law protects where they came from.](#)



## One Last Thing

Eighteen days after tunneling out of his pen, [Kevin Bacon is home](#). The Pennsylvania pig (literally, it’s a pig) was captured with the help of a Benadryl-laced sticky bun. His footloose days are likely over, as his owners said they’ve since reinforced his pen with concrete to prevent future escapes.

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