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News Release

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WATCH THE 2022 STATE OF THE STATE ADDRESS

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The Governor's full remarks:

Speaker Bowers, President Fann, Leaders Rios and Bolding, Chief Justice Brutinel, Members of the Legislature and Judiciary, everyone assembled here – the families, the friends, the special guests and dignitaries – all my fellow Arizonans: There is nowhere else I'd rather be right now than here, in this chamber, on this floor, together, in person, smiling, shaking hands, and celebrating the strength and the future of the State of Arizona.

Typically in an even numbered year, we've logged a lot of hours working together. But today we have an unusually large number of fresh faces. And that makes it all the more exciting. Would all the new members of the House and Senate – those sworn in since our last sine die – please rise? Welcome.

Without citizens like yourselves and your colleagues willing to participate and make the sacrifices that inevitably come along the way – the cornerstone of our great democracy,

"We the People" – is merely words. You make it a reality. Thank you all for your service and civic participation.

We've also got some not so fresh faces among us. Near the top of the list – me.

I have the unique privilege of doing something today no Arizona governor has done in more than three decades, reporting on the State of our State for my 8th time. And so I begin by expressing my sincere and eternal gratitude to the people of Arizona for entrusting me with two terms in this incredible job – and to all of you for your partnership along the way. Thank you.

And to my family for supporting me, and for all that you didn't sign up for – most of all, tolerating State of the State rehearsals around the kitchen table year after year – and especially to Angela for her continued advocacy for the most vulnerable children and citizens of our state: I love you, and thank you.

But for those who think it's going to be a quiet year on the 9th Floor, you haven't been paying attention. As I enter the fourth and final quarter, I'm reminded of something my high school coach told me – "Get in and get the job done." And as I stand here today, the job isn't done. The goodbyes will come later – much later. I've got 357 days, 21 hours, 44 minutes, and 18 seconds before the end of the game, and I intend to make the most of every moment and work hard all along the way for my employers – the citizens of this state.

Ladies and gentleman, at the risk of sounding repetitive, the State of our State is strong. And we are poised to do what everyone in public service strives for: to leave it stronger than we found it.

Last session was one for the record books. Together, we made it the most successful since I've been down here – and I'm not just talking about cocktails to-go.

Liability reform for our small businesses. Bipartisan wildfire solutions and funding to match. New revenue streams through a modernization of our tribal gaming compacts.

New school choice options for kids and families. A record investment in roads, infrastructure, broadband and affordable housing. Nearly 100 percent of citizens 65 and older with at least one shot of the vaccine thanks to a national model for distribution brought to you by Dr. Cara Christ, Michael Bidwill and the Arizona Cardinals. We led the way with universal licensing reform. And with the leadership of Dr. Regina Cobb, we passed another first in the nation Arizona policy that everyone is rushing to copy: telemedicine. And a list we are very proud to be at the top of: the largest tax cut in Arizona history, with the passage of the lowest flat tax in the nation.

And yet anyone who has ever worked with me will attest: I have a hard time stopping to celebrate victory. It was true at Cold Stone, and it's been true in the public square. So naturally, after we signed the budget, I told my staff: "In 2022, we're going to top all of this." And so we've been hard at work to make this a banner year.

One thing that was clear when we went back to review the tape on the last seven years: As co-equal branches of government, working in good faith with the Legislature, we have set the bar very high.

Arizona is better positioned than at any time in our 110 year history. And that makes our work and our priorities much different than when I stood before you the first time.

You know the facts: Back then, the state budget was broken – in the red by \$1 billion.

I remember meeting just days after the 2014 election, and reviewing options. In the easy column, budget gimmicks and tax increases. On the other side, budget cuts and tough decisions.

In that election, I ran on having built a business, and I committed to shrink a government and grow an economy. And together, we have done just that.

Today, a lot is different in Arizona. We have lived within our means: We have more citizens, our budget is balanced, our economy is roaring and our government is smaller and more efficient than it's ever been. In fact, we believe so strongly in shrinking

government that for the first time ever we are demolishing unneeded state buildings, on track to reduce our footprint by nearly 750,000 square feet since we got here.

We are sitting atop a surplus of several billion dollars, fueled not by tax increases – but by the opposite: historic economic growth. It turns out free-market capitalism works. Supply-side economics might not be the sexiest thing for candidates to run on these days, but it sure looks good on a spreadsheet.

Today, our state revenue is growing at an even faster rate than the so-called experts predicted. So this year, just like in the past, we are going to double-down on what works. Rather than endless, needless programs that waste the people's money, we are going to be targeted and responsible.

We will resist the cries from the spending lobby, and once again, we will allow the people to keep their hard-earned money. We will cut taxes.

It's really not that complicated; it's just basic common sense. Government takes in more than it needs to pay the bills, and the taxpayer should get to keep his or her hard-earned dollars.

Today, jobs are plentiful. Back in 2014, I remember getting grilled on the campaign trail about how all the jobs Arizona was getting were call centers and construction. My response? There's dignity in all work, and it was true. But for far too many employers and businesses, Arizona was, in fact, a flyover state on their way to Texas. We knew we could do better if we could get those decision-makers to stop here, so we could make the pitch to show what a beautiful state we live in. Now, because of our combined work, we have an all-of-the-above approach on jobs. Not just call centers but also car manufacturers, autonomous vehicles, tech start-ups and world-class semiconductors. We said we wanted to be a jobs juggernaut, and in the process, we became a paycheck paradise. Plus, unlike California, Illinois and New York, here you actually get to keep your paycheck.

But still, there's no denying what's happening on a national level is straining families and

seniors' checkbooks. Washington's spending spree, combined with mismanagement of COVID, has broken our supply chain and inflated the cost of everything. A staggering surge of 6.8 percent – food, clothing, gas, prescription drugs. The largest increase in the cost of daily life in nearly four decades. A White House in denial it's even occurring. And a President hell bent on printing and borrowing money while raising taxes. This is not a strategy that will help working people.

It all makes our commitment of returning money to the people more important than ever. Washington D.C. might have their eye on your paycheck – but at this Capitol, the only special interest on our mind is the taxpayer.

We have made Arizona a top destination for jobs and companies. Low taxes. A strong, reliable energy grid, with the largest nuclear power plant in the United States. And a great quality of life — they all go a long way.

But as any business person knows: The hidden taxes of the regulatory state can be the real killer. And for small businesses, start-ups and independent contractors, these regulations are a death sentence.

We've taken a baseball bat to that bureaucracy, with a moratorium on new regulations ever since 2015. I don't know about you, but I haven't heard any complaints. Maybe because we've already saved taxpayers \$169 million. Let's make these reforms permanent, in law, and ensure Arizona is always the land of economic freedom and opportunity for all.

Arizona workers are the ones truly fueling our healthy and transformed economy. Our manufacturing sector is on fire – it's even outpaced construction, which is a tough hill to climb. If we weren't turning out so many electric cars, I'd say: 'Let's pour on the gas.' Instead – I'll put it this way: Let's invest in the worker, arming them with the skills they need for our growing semiconductor and advanced manufacturing industries. Whether your top issue is workforce or rural jobs, this is the way to do it: Our budget makes historic investments into community colleges to empower our people with a quality education and the skills of the future.

Nevertheless, leave it to Washington D.C. – politicians there are doing everything they can to stand in the way of freedom. Big government socialism is a failed and dangerous experiment. But it doesn't stop some from trying it time and time again – paying people not to work and disincentivizing initiative and self-determination.

That's not the Arizona way. So we called D.C.'s bluff and instead said: "Thanks, but no thanks" to unnecessary unemployment benefits. There's no such thing as a free lunch or free money. Instead we will focus on rewarding hard work.

This approach has meant that people keep moving here. Less taxes means more taxpayers. During the pandemic, as other states grandstanded, Arizona protected lives, livelihoods and individual liberty. People flocked here, and they've stayed. And who wouldn't love it?

President Ronald Reagan once said that if the pilgrims had landed on the west coast, they wouldn't have bothered to discover the rest of the country. But today, there is an exodus from California. And the same is true of other states with similar flawed policies. The lack of opportunity, fueled by bad governing philosophies, are hurting real Americans and pushing them out to states like Arizona, where opportunity is abundant.

Sure, some have groaned, but growth is a good problem to have. The alternative is to be a state in decline, misery and decay. No state's path to success has ever been paved with "Closed for Business" signs. Our only request to our new citizens is: Don't forget why you came here in the first place. Freedom, opportunity and good government matter.

Make no mistake: We will keep Arizona – Arizona.

Our way is tried and true. In the past, when Arizona has veered off course, it hasn't turned out well. And that brings us to another thing we found seven years ago when we got here. The state had amassed billions of dollars in debt through the recession, fueled by out-of-control spending in the early 2000s and budget shellgames. They even had to sell off this building. A couple of years ago, thanks to the leadership here, we got the

deed back. And last year, we paid off billions more in debt – ratcheting it down to historically low levels. We took our Rainy Day fund to a record-breaking \$1 billion. As a result, we have higher credit ratings than when we got here and that means even more savings to the taxpayer. So why stop now?

I'll present a budget on Friday that keeps this stewardship going – paying off more debt, and topping off our Rainy Day Fund, so that we don't just own this house, but we leave the people's house truly in order.

We are blessed to be a magnet for America's veterans. They represent the best of our country, and as any hiring manager will tell you: Veterans are among their most prized and productive employees.

We celebrate our veterans and want more of them in the State of Arizona. Would all the veterans here today please rise so we can recognize your service to our nation?

We continue to find ways to honor our veterans. In the State of Arizona today, thanks to the efforts of Representative Gail Griffin and Senator David Gowan, veterans pay no taxes on their military pension.

Under the G.I. Bill, they also get to attend our in-state universities and community colleges free of charge. After all, they've already given so much. But how about their spouses? These dedicated husbands and wives have served and sacrificed as well. So this session, let's launch a program to waive their tuition too.

K-12 education is one of the reasons so many of us ran for office in the first place. But as an outsider, it was striking to me when I got to this Capitol that our school discussions weren't about what kids actually learned. Bureaucrats were competing for who could spend more money. Fewer dollars were going to the classroom, and instead lining the pockets of trial attorneys.

But we pressed forward: positioning Arizona as the number one school choice state in the nation.

When COVID hit, that designation was a lifeline for families. Some school leaders did everything possible to keep kids in the classroom. But too often, politics and virtue signaling took center stage. In the process, more parents got involved. And thank God they did. Some voted with their feet – moving schools or school districts or to totally different learning models – whether that’s homeschooling or microschools.

But other families have seen their kids fall behind. There’s been too much attention put on masks and not nearly enough placed on math; a focus on restrictions rather than reading and writing. And it’s students of color and those in poverty who have been most impacted by the COVID-era posturing and politics of some school board bureaucrats.

So come June, we’re launching a summer camp with an emphasis on catching kids up in key areas: math, reading and American civics. We will lead the way to eliminate learning loss. And in case you haven’t checked Twitter lately: Arizona schools are open and they will remain open.

In Arizona schools, we will not divide people by race. Arizona schools should be instructing our kids in the Golden Rule – to treat one another with respect, and judge people as Martin Luther King Junior taught, on the content of their character and not the color of their skin. This session we’ll make it clear. Students should be taught to think critically – not taught critical race theory.

But let’s not stop there. Parents deserve respect – and the occasional parent-teacher conference isn’t enough. It’s 2022. We’ve got the technology. Let’s require all that a child is taught, all curriculum and academic materials be put online and available to search and review by every parent, grandparent and interested citizen.

Arizona has set the standard for school choice and innovative education solutions – and it’s because of the vision of Arizona leaders that paved the way. Leaders like Governor Fife Symington, Superintendent of Public Instruction Lisa Graham Keegan and Democratic Representative Armando Ruiz, who worked in a bipartisan way to create new opportunities for students – open enrollment, charter schools. They knew that parents

were best equipped to make decisions around their child's education.

And new people are stepping up every day. Leaders like Janelle Wood, a mom and founder of the Black Mothers Forum. Janelle has led the way in creating new learning models where students receive personalized support. Many of Janelle's students were several grades behind, but with her unique focus on ensuring students feel safe, secure and ready to learn and grow, they quickly made gains towards academic excellence.

Janelle is here today. Janelle – thank you for your service and work to benefit Arizona kids.

Fifty-plus years ago politicians stood in the schoolhouse door and wouldn't let minorities in, today union-backed politicians stand in the schoolhouse door and won't let minorities out. Many of our poor kids and children of color are trapped in a failing school. It's time to set these families free.

This session, let's expand school choice any way we can — greater open enrollment, new transportation models, more charter schools and more educational freedom for families, especially those in failing schools or who can't afford to pick up and move to a new neighborhood. Let's think big and find more ways to get kids into the school of their parents' choice. Send me the bills, and I'll sign them.

For Angela and I, the children in the care of the state - our foster kids - have had a special place in our hearts. I know you all feel the same. We've made notable strides in this area, thanks to our dedicated Child Safety caseworkers. With investments, we've seen lower caseloads and rapid placement of kids into safe, loving homes. And when other states switched to virtual home-inspections, in Arizona, these dedicated women and men showed up in person every day to keep these kids safe.

But unfortunately, we will never work ourselves out of a job in this area – and the pandemic hasn't been good for these vulnerable children.

Often, it's grandma or grandpa, an aunt or uncle, who steps up to care for these kids. It can be better for the child, and often cheaper for the state because historically, they

haven't been treated as foster families. More than 6,000 children in Arizona live in these homes — all the evidence you need that you can't put a price tag on love. So moving forward, these loving extended family members should have the same resources as any other foster family. We'll make sure of that this year.

We've had success getting good ideas done together. But there's also something to be said for just saying "no" to really bad ideas. When the Left demanded "defund the police", Arizona said, "no chance." Instead we invested more in our men and women in blue. And we plan to do it again.

Arizona, Texas, Florida, Tennessee: All are among the fastest growing states in the nation. And the policies that made us so attractive can be applied to cities as well.

If you are an elected official charged with overseeing a police department and you don't believe there's a correlation between the attacks on law enforcement and rising crime rates nationally, you need a reality check because you're putting public safety and human life at risk. We intend to keep Arizona a place where we honor and value our cops and all of law enforcement, including correctional officers and first responders. A place where public safety matters. No riots. No smash and grab. And a news flash for the DOJ and Merrick Garland: Mr. Attorney General, instead of attacking Police Chief Jeri Williams and her officers for risking their lives and keeping Arizona streets safe during civil unrest, your time would be better spent protecting the federal courthouses in Portland, Seattle and San Francisco. Do your job.

When we need them, Arizona law enforcement is there. No matter the circumstance. No complaints. No virtual work. Some of our State Troopers are here with us today. Join me in showing our appreciation for their selfless service.

When it comes to building a budget, public safety will always be at the top of our list. And this year, we have a record surplus. So our budget proposes making our State Troopers in Arizona the highest paid law enforcement professionals in the state. I know you agree – they've earned it.

And we're going to be leaning on their dedication more than ever. Our southern border has never been more deadly or more dangerous. Meanwhile, the White House and Congress have decided to turn a blind eye. This is a national crisis – and it calls for leadership.

A few years ago, we came together – every Republican and Democrat in this entire chamber – and passed the Arizona Opioid Epidemic Act. It was historic. But now President Biden and his cabinet members are working against us. Fentanyl is streaming across the border. It's causing death and devastation, and there's no plan and zero action from the administration. Secretary Mayorkas is AWOL. The White House has canceled the word "crisis." And for self-proclaimed border czar, Kamala Harris, this is just another laughing matter. This is a dereliction of duty by the highest officeholders in our nation. And in Arizona, we will do what they refuse to do.

We've got a strong track record:

In 2015, we created the Arizona Border Strike Force to take on the cartels and protect our state against the flow of criminals, narcotics, weapons and ammunition. President Biden refuses to deploy the National Guard despite the fact it's been done by every other President in recent history, including Barack Obama. So in April, we deployed them ourselves, providing much needed assistance to local law enforcement. And with the leadership here, we invested \$55 million in last year's budget to amplify all these efforts.

But more action and manpower are needed. Here's the plan:

Number one: Resources.

Our budget will make significant new investments to strengthen the border strike force, provide advanced equipment to aid in the pursuit of dangerous criminals, and deploy the latest drone technology to bolster surveillance and stop the cartels in their tracks.

Next: The rule of law.

This is not just a public safety crisis; it's a humanitarian crisis. And the human traffickers that prey on the desperation of people looking for a better life need to pay the consequences. It's time for us to increase the criminal penalties against human smuggling and provide more funding to border counties to ensure prosecution and incarceration.

Third: Boots on the ground and multistate intelligence sharing.

Border security is national security, and the lack of action from D.C. puts every American at risk. In November, I dispatched Arizona's top-ranking enforcement officers to partner with their peers in Texas: Major General Kerry Muehlenbeck, Department of Public Safety Colonel Heston Silbert, and Department of Homeland Security Director Tim Roemer. In December, we finalized the plan. Texas Governor Greg Abbott and I are teaming up to form the American Governor's Border Strike Force – a commitment between states to do what the Biden administration is unwilling to do: Patrol and secure our border.

Fourth: The Wall and physical barriers. They work.

Representatives Joanne Osborne and Tim Dunn and Senator Sine Kerr were with me in Yuma a few weeks ago and we saw it first hand – people walking across a wide-open and unprotected border. Our border is a patchwork of federal, state, tribal and private lands. Where Arizona can add physical barriers to the border, we will.

But if the entire southern border isn't secure, neither is our nation. So fifth: I'm calling on our United States senators to join this fight to secure our border. No member of the Arizona congressional delegation that actually cares about the safety of our communities should vote "yes" on any legislation until the President agrees to language that does the following: Secures our border with a wall, a physical barrier and virtual surveillance; increases resources to the local communities that have been devastated by these dangerous open border policies; and makes it clear that our border is not open to illegal immigration.

Senator Kelly, Senator Sinema - check my website. We've even drafted the language for you.

The takeaway: In Arizona, we will secure our border. We will protect public safety. We will not back down. We will fight this fight until Washington D.C. finally acts.

Rule of law and equal justice under the law have been bedrocks of our Republic and guiding principles of our work together. A few years ago, when we learned of the massive backlog of untested rape kits, we worked in a bipartisan manner to clear that backlog and to make sure victims were prioritized. But as we've learned, government bureaucrats often find a way around the law. In this case, some counties are charging these women – these victims – up to \$800 in processing charges, and sending the bill to collections. It's shameful, so we will be cracking down on this government abuse and with your help, tightening the law.

One area where our work clearly isn't done is on water. We passed a monumental policy that we were told would never happen – the Drought Contingency Plan. After that one, I determined – in Arizona, if we can do this, we can do just about anything. Then last year, with Speaker Bowers' leadership, we put our money where our mouth is: \$200 million to invest in the water technology of the future. Now, with resources available in our budget, a relationship with Mexico that we've built and strengthened over the last seven years, and the need clear – what better place to invest more? Instead of just talking about desalination – the technology that made Israel the world's water superpower – how about we pave the way to make it actually happen? So Speaker Bowers, President Fann and I have been working, and we propose that we make a historic investment: \$1 billion.

Our goal: Secure Arizona's water future for the next 100 years.

Our state has grown and thrived because of the foresight of past leaders on this issue – Carl Hayden, Barry Goldwater, Bruce Babbitt and Jon Kyl. The result: the Central Arizona Project, the Salt River Project, the Hoover Dam, the Roosevelt Dam. Now it's our turn, our moment, to leave this state better than we found it. Let's rise to the occasion.

More people means more infrastructure needs. Not just on water, but roads and bridges. We've made record investments in road repairs and improvements. A few years ago, we got together and prioritized expansion of the I-17. Then, thanks to the leadership of Senator T.J. Shope and Governor Lewis of the Gila River Indian Community, we paved the way for a wider I-10 to improve movement and commerce between Tucson and Phoenix. But that project is still scheduled several years out from now, and 94 visits as Governor to southern Arizona will remind you how important this issue is. So, let's finish the job. Our budget will invest more dollars to get the I-10 completion leap-frogged to the front of the priority list, ahead of schedule, connecting our entire state, North to South.

As you see, as much progress as we've made – there's plenty left to do on so many fronts. And we'll have all year to grind it out together: a continued focus on the health of our citizens, and support for our hospitals, and dedicated healthcare workers; investments in cyber security to protect the identity and data of our citizens; improvements to our elections, to bring confidence and security; better broadband connectivity all across rural Arizona; more efforts to prevent wildfires; maintaining Arizona's position as the number one pro-second amendment state in the nation; protecting life in every way possible; and all along the way, preparing for another Super Bowl, where our beautiful state will be center stage just a year from now.

An ambitious agenda, to be sure. One that can cement our successes and the good reforms we've made, and further expand opportunity and optimism here in our state.

No doubt, there will be challenges. In fact, some have said we can't get much done this year. Divided chambers. An election. Why bother? I disagree. Let's aim high and think big.

We're smarter today, and as I look around this chamber – I see the wisdom of our veteran lawmakers, side by side with the energy and fresh perspective of the newcomers – and that's a combo that is sure to produce results.

So whether you're like me, in the camp with my friends Rusty and Karen – we've only got

a year left in these jobs – or you're just getting started, let's recommit today to giving our all to getting the job done for the people who have hired us.

Thank you, and God bless the great State of Arizona.

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