



# Arizona State Senate can't find agreement on the budget, joins the House in recess

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PHOENIX — The Arizona State Senate had the capitol all to itself today and yet was unable to get work done on the budget.

Senate President Karen Fann was hopeful at the start of the day, but any chance the Senate would slog through hours of debate evaporated quickly.

“At the end of the day, I don’t think the votes were ever there,” said Arizona Senate Minority Leader Rebecca Rios (D) Laveen District 27.

Senate Democrats are unanimous in their opposition to the budget, so Republicans need every member to vote for the proposal.

Going into Thursday’s floor session, they were not close to reaching that goal.

State Senator Kelly Townsend (R) East Mesa District 16, is a no vote until the Senate votes on her election bill, which is still in the House.

Senator Michelle Ugenti-Rita is no vote because the budget is too large for her liking.

And then there is the matter of the flat tax; a proposal that permanently removes \$1.5 billion dollars in state spending.

“It will give a massive cut to the wealthiest of Arizonans on the backs of the poor and the middle class,” said Reverend Hunter Ruffin of the Church of the Epiphany in Tempe.

Reverend Ruffin was one of a number of church leaders from the Arizona Interfaith Network which came out against the flat tax Thursday, joining the chorus of cities, towns, and others who oppose what they see as a money giveaway to the rich.

In a statement before leaving the floor, Senate Democrats said, “Arizona doesn't need more tax cuts that will only help corporations and the wealthiest. After a decade of slashed budgets, we have a real opportunity to meet the needs of our students, senior citizens and most vulnerable. Arizona needs to fund COVID recovery for families and small businesses and invest in services and programs that benefit all Arizonans. The Republican budget does none of those things.”

As senators started leaving, Senate President Fann went into another meeting, her second of the day, with the Governor’s budget team, planning for what’s next.

Both the Senate and the House are in recess until June 10, but the date can be moved up if Republican leaders believe they have the votes to pass the budget.