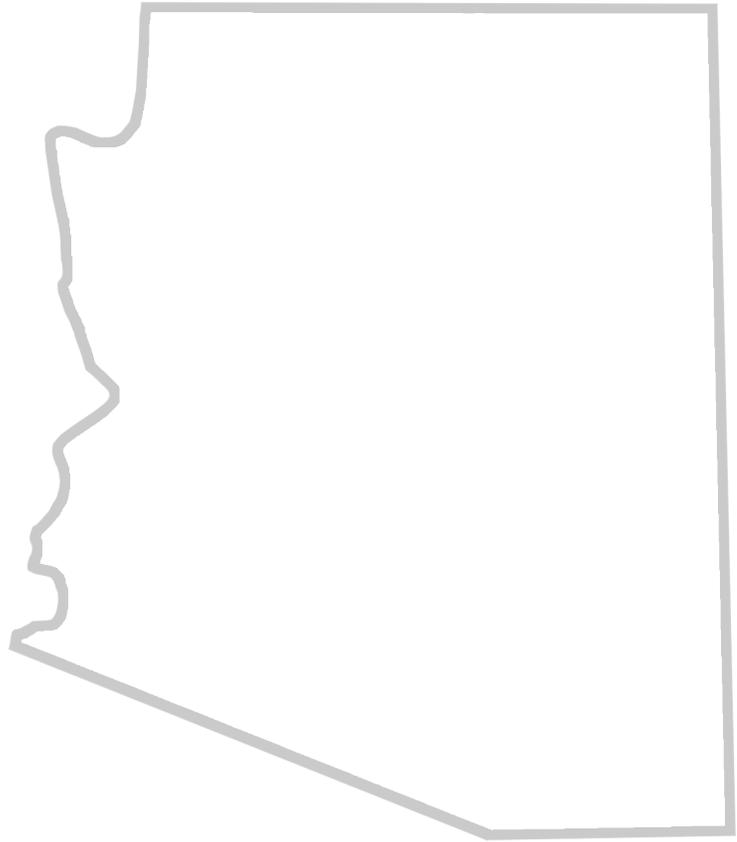


Revisiting the Urban-Rural Relationship in Arizona



David R. Berman

Professor Emeritus of Political Science

Arizona State University

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Throughout the nation, there has been somewhat of a revival in urban living, and many big cities seem relatively well off in economic terms, though progress has been uneven. On the other hand, many rural areas have been in decline and seem likely to continue to lose out when it comes to population, economic development, and political influence in state politics. A wide variety of socio-economic measurements indicate that rural counties are in particularly bad shape, far worse off than the other major population groupings of big cities, suburbs, and small-to-medium metro areas.¹ Population losses, unemployment, and poverty are common to many small towns in rural areas. One can find numerous examples of towns where a major employer has shut down or moved away and the community shrinks to a point where governments can do virtually nothing to stem the contraction.²

This report, based on an examination of population, voting, and governmental spending information, relevant archival and secondary sources, and a series of interviews, looks into the long-term developments affecting urban-rural relations in Arizona. It focuses on basic changes disrupting the relations since the 1960s, the attitudes, needs, and issues of people in rural communities, rural influence in the political system at the state level, and where the division might take us.³ The discussion generally compares Arizona's two most populous counties, which are largely urban in nature, Maricopa and Pima, with the remaining 13 counties, largely rural in nature and often considered "outstate" areas remote from the state's major population centers, though the extent of the remoteness varies. Reference is also made to governmental reports that define urban and rural in different ways though they cover much of the same territory.⁴

Forces of Change: Urban Growth and the Reapportionment Revolution

Decennial census reports of the U.S. Census Bureau show Arizona first became a majority urban state in 1950 and since then has steadily grown to a point where nearly 90% of the population is urban (see Table 1). Since the 1960 census, Arizona has had a higher urban percentage than the national average. While the Bureau's definition of what is rural has varied over time, and its definition is not the only one employed by the federal government, there is no doubt that the nation as a whole, including Arizona, has been becoming less and less rural.

Much of the growth has taken place in Maricopa County and to a lesser extent Pima County, which, according to a 2018 estimate, together constitute 76% of the state's population (5.4 million out of the state's 7.1 million people). The remaining 13 counties have 1.7 million people, 24% of the population (see Table 2). Nine of the 10 most populated cities in the state are located in Maricopa County. In recent

Table 1. Arizona Population, Percent Urban, Compared to National Population*

Year	Arizona Population	Percent Urban	National Population Percent Urban
1900	122,931	15.9	39.6
1910	204,354	31.0	45.6
1920	334,162	36.1	51.2
1930	435,573	34.4	56.1
1940	499,261	34.8	56.5
1950	749,587	55.5	64.0
1960	1,302,161	74.5	69.9
1970	1,770,900	79.6	73.6
1980	2,718,215	83.8	73.7
1990	3,665,228	87.5	75.2
2000	5,130,632	88.2	79.0
2010	6,407,774	89.8	80.7

*Urban population percentages are based on different measurements and are not directly comparable over time. Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

Table 2. Arizona Counties Ranked by 2018 Population

County	Population
Maricopa	4,410,824
Pima	1,039,073
Pinal	447,138
Yavapai	231,993
Yuma	212,128
Mohave	209,550
Coconino	142,854
Cochise	126,770
Navajo	110,445
Apache	71,818
Gila	53,889
Santa Cruz	46,511
Graham	38,072
La Paz	21,098
Greenlee	9,483
Total	7,171,646

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

years, Maricopa County has often been designated the fastest-growing county in the country. By itself, Maricopa County has 62% of the total population. Along with the population shifts, Arizona has over the years experienced a political shift in rural-urban relations thanks in large part to the restructuring of the state Legislature in terms of representation.

In the 1950s, rural areas were overrepresented in the Legislature in terms of population. An apportionment plan approved by the voters in 1953 gave each of the state's counties, 14 at the time, equal representation in the Senate. Although Maricopa and Pima counties had over 70% of the state's population, they had only four of the 28 votes in the Senate. Theoretically, about 13% of the voters could elect a majority of the members of the upper house. The disproportionate representation of smaller counties meant that mining, farming and ranching interests, working largely with Democrats from the smaller counties, were able to control Senate activity. One observer noted that the general approach of these Democrats to the legislative process was "to keep new legislation to a minimum, hold down appropriations, and adjourn."⁵ Looking back, a state senator from a mining area noted that the mining, farming, and ranching interests "weren't about to stand for somebody raising their taxes foolishly."⁶ Their influence produced "the most conservative legislators we ever had."⁷

Under the 1953 plan, representation in the House was more favorable to the larger counties than it was in the Senate. Each of the 14 counties received at least one representative in the 80-member body, but the plan distributed the remaining seats among the counties on the basis of the number of votes cast in each county in the preceding gubernatorial election – an indirect though not perfect reflection of population differences.

Population growth in Maricopa County produced a significant turn-around for the Republican Party in 1952 when it sent 30 members to the state House. Republicans maintained or added to their strength in the House throughout the 1950s and 1960s and, with a sizable block of votes, altered the balance of power in that body. Democrats, for a time, were able to offset a loss of influence due to population changes by forming coalitions with the growing number of Republican legislators from Maricopa County. From 1952 to the mid-1960s, Democrats and Republicans often joined forces to elect the speaker of the House. Divisions over the election of the speaker usually persisted through the legislative session, occurring on other questions of procedure and on policy matters. As in much of the country at the time, conservative rural legislators had considerable success working with like-minded conservatives from urban areas, especially the suburbs, and business groups fearful of increased taxes, spending, and regulations.⁸

While population growth forced some changes in the state house, it took a U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Reynolds v. Sims* in 1964 to end rural domination in the Arizona Senate and fundamentally change the locus of power in the state. The court declared that both houses of a state legislature must be based on population. Several politically active Arizonans expressed considerable concern that the court's decision would produce a Legislature controlled by city dwellers, especially those living in Phoenix and its suburbs in Maricopa County. Such views from political leaders from various part of the state and from both parties appeared in an article written for *The Wall Street Journal* shortly after the *Reynolds* decision. A conservative Democrat from a rural county in northern Arizona said: "Under the present setup we can usually get our point of view across and hit a compromise, but give (Phoenix) both the Senate and the House and the legislature wouldn't even stop to listen to us." A veteran legislator from Northern Arizona joined in: "These Phoenix people, many of whom are newcomers to the state, (will) come into the legislature hell-bent to correct all sorts of imagined inequities without regard for how their remedies would affect the rest of us." From the eastern part of the state an Arizona legislator predicted: "You can be sure that if the state say-so is strictly Maricopa's, it will get all it can drink and leave us with the dregs." Some of those interviewed expressed sympathy for rural areas. They felt that rural areas and urban areas had little in common and that an urban takeover would mean more taxes and less water for the rural parts of the state and a shift of highway and school outlays to the cities. On the other hand, some pointed to the long decades of urban subservience to rural domination in which, they argued, urban needs had been neglected. They expressed the need to finally bring the state government closer to those living in urban areas, people who constituted far more than a majority of the people living in the state, and to improve the provision of services to them. For those favoring change, their biggest fear was that it would not go far enough because differences between Phoenix and its suburbs would prevent legislative action.⁹

Following up on the *Reynolds* decision, a lower federal court in Arizona in 1966 invalidated the system used to apportion seats in both the Senate and the House. The Legislature's failure to come up with an acceptable plan prompted the federal court to order its own plan in effect for the 1966 elections. The court-ordered plan, which is still in use, reduced the size of the House to 60 members and increased the membership of the Senate to 30. It created 30 districts relatively equal in population. Voters in each district elected one Senator and two House members.

In 1966, Republicans took control of the state Legislature for the first time in the state's history and ushered in a new era in state politics. The practice of building governing coalitions cutting across party lines came to an end after

1966 when the Republicans began to capture enough seats to elect a speaker and form a general governing coalition without Democratic votes. Reapportionment severely reduced the influence of the rural conservative Democrats and, indirectly, of mining, ranching, and farming interests in state politics. The election brought to power a set of urban-centered reform-minded Republican leaders, who produced large increases in the general fund budget (the budget grew from \$181 million in 1966 to \$736 million in 1974). Much of this expanded budget went to education and led to the reorganization of state agencies, which created several larger departments reporting directly to the governor.¹⁰ One soon heard rural complaints. Speaking out in the late 1970s, for example, Rep. John Wettaw of Flagstaff declared: “Rural Arizona cannot be neglected by state government any longer. The needs are great and must be addressed.”¹¹

Rural Attitudes, Needs, and Issues

Recent studies suggest rural residents often feel misunderstood or overlooked by their urban counterparts and some see themselves as being unfairly left behind when it comes to jobs and the distribution of governmental resources. Surveys also show sharp partisan and ideological differences. Nationally, much of the rural-urban battle has pitted Democrats on the urban side and Republicans on the rural side, something that was borne out in the 2016 presidential election, with rural areas favoring Republican Donald Trump and urban areas Democrat Hillary Clinton.¹²

Much of what is suggested in national studies and studies in specific states about the urban-rural split is also reflected in Arizona. Overall, the growth of Maricopa County appears to be of concern to people in the rest of the state. Rural leaders, with considerable scorn, refer to “the state of Maricopa.” One rural mayor interviewed for this study said there was little rural areas can do to stem the urban giant: “They have more people, more money, more clout.” As the mayor saw it, “Living in rural areas means you have to give up some things, but at the same time rural living offers much.” Other mayors were less accepting of the status quo – one wanted to battle, indeed, to go back to the period prior to *Reynolds v. Sims* when rural areas had more control. Interviewees frequently complained about rural areas being ignored and shortchanged, with most of the jobs going to Maricopa County and urban areas doing better than they should in regard to the distribution of funds. Some felt people in urban areas “don’t even know where we are, that we exist.” Another added that people in the cities were simply unaware of what life was like in their part of the state.

In Arizona, the partisan battle lines separating urban and rural areas exist though they may not be as sharp as they are in many other places. The state as a whole has been

relatively Republican and Republicans generally have outdone Democrats when it comes to registered voters in both the urban and rural county groups, though, as one might expect, they have done better in the rural group. On January 1, 2019, for example, of the 1,873,680 people in the urban counties of Maricopa and Pima who registered with one of the two major parties, 52% registered Republican and 48% registered Democrat. Of the 611,559 people who registered with one of the two major parties in the remaining counties, 55% registered as Republican and 45% as Democrat. Rural areas have a stronger Republican and, perhaps, conservative core than urban areas. Republican strength in both places may, however, help explain why, as indicated below, rural voters and urban voters have tended to agree on political candidates.¹³

While there are pros and cons to rural living, there is no doubt that there are substantial pressing rural needs. As Table 3 shows, rural areas in Arizona suffer in comparison to urban areas when it comes to income, education, and employment measurements. Rural measurements in all these areas are, by some estimates, low in an absolute sense as well as a comparative one. Rural small town leaders in Arizona, as elsewhere, have to worry about

Table 3. Arizona Rural/Urban Comparisons: Income, Education, Employment*

Item	Rural	Urban	Total
Per-capita income 2017	\$33,388	\$42,744	\$42,280
Poverty Rate percent 2017	26.4%	14.3%	14.9%
Percent of persons 25 and older not completing high-school, 2013-2017	30.5%	23.8%	24.2%
Percent of persons 25 and older completing college	15.6%	29.1%	28.4%
Unemployment rate percent, 2017	7.6%	4.8%	4.9%

*The distinction between “urban” and “rural” in this table is based on data for metropolitan and nonmetropolitan counties as classified by the federal Office of Management and Budget (see footnote 4). Source: United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service. <https://data.ers.usda.gov/reports.aspx?StateFIPS=04&StateName=Arizona&ID=17854>.

losing young people because of a lack of jobs, meeting the needs of an older population, attracting more doctors and other health care providers, keeping small hospitals open, maintaining roads and other infrastructure, coping with declining school enrollments and teacher shortages, and improving broadband communications.

In recent years, some small towns in Arizona's fast-growing metropolitan areas have experienced rapid growth in population, while others in more isolated rural areas have lost population or have been barely able to hold on to what they had. In rural Arizona, one finds localities with struggling "one crop" economies based on farming, ranching, or mining hoping to find a way to improve their attractiveness to companies looking to expand or relocate. But the quest for development is difficult.

Some of the problems in employment and incomes, as in the mining communities, can be traced to developments in the broader economy, some global in nature, which brought the collapse of local industries. These are developments local, state, and federal officials can do little or nothing about. Some small rural towns hang on because they have some "quaintness factor" that attracts tourists on a seasonal basis. Many are dependent on the seasonal tourist trade.

Education

Among the major areas of concern in rural areas are education, infrastructure, and economic development. Studies suggest that Arizona rural schools, which serve about 35% of all the state's students, need considerable help.¹⁴ Many have been losing students and with a declining enrollment face a loss of state funds (the funding formula is built around a per-pupil amount), which are revenues they find difficult to offset with local taxes. Rural spokespersons have called on legislators to spend more on public education in rural areas and some have voiced opposition to diverting funds into voucher-like Empowerment Scholarship Accounts.¹⁵

Sam Hosler, former mayor of the town of Kearney, has been among those unhappy with what he has seen as the push at the state level to put more money into charter schools at the expense of public schools. To the mayor, public schools are "the only schools which truly serve rural Arizona." The mayor though felt much had to be done to improve these schools: "We need quality public schools, where teachers won't leave because of lousy pay and benefits, but will be suitably recognized for their worth to our children and college students. Education is much more than job training, too, but I recognize that without a good education our children will not have good work."¹⁶

Infrastructure

Local government spokespeople, whether their communities be large or small, urban or rural, have long complained that state raids on the Highway Users Revenue Fund, built with gas and motor vehicle fees, severely hamper their ability to keep roads in shape. Cutbacks on road funds or their diversion into other state programs is especially harmful to smaller jurisdictions because they are generally less able to make up for the lost revenue. As a result, people in the rural parts of the state have especially suffered because of the lack of road maintenance.¹⁷ Rural roads in the state are among the most dangerous in the nation when it comes to fatalities.¹⁸ Rural dwellers spend much time driving long distances for work, schools, health care, or general shopping and do so on poor and dangerous roads.¹⁹ Given the distances they travel, they may be more likely to be affected by an increase in the gas tax. The state has had a long-standing problem of how to maintain a network of roads connecting widely scattered small settlements in rural areas. Good roads in rural areas though are essential in establishing the economic connection to urban areas with rural products flowing one way and urban tourists flowing the other.

Battles over the distribution of state education and highway funds have long been part of Arizona politics. Another and even more intense rural-urban dispute has involved the distribution of groundwater. This was especially true in the 1980s when cities, including Phoenix, Scottsdale, and Mesa in Maricopa County and Tucson in Pima County saw the need to buy rural groundwater rights to ensure they met the requirement of the 1980 Groundwater Management Act that they have an adequate supply of water to support future development. The backlash to transfers led to the Groundwater Transportation Act in 1991, which severely restricted the right to transport groundwater, though a few limited exceptions were built into the legislation.

Economic Development

The broader issue of economic development is a strong source of urban-rural tension. From the urban point of view development naturally best takes place where large numbers of people, a thriving business economy, a well-prepared labor force, and social and cultural attractions giving people something to do, already exist. From this perspective, rural areas have little to offer and it makes sense for the good of the state to divert resources, including water found in rural areas, to support continued development in urban areas. From the rural point of view, rather than steer development into areas where there are already too many people, it makes more sense to encourage development in

new areas where there are fewer people and, rather than transport water from rural areas to the cities, encourage people and businesses to locate where water already can be found.²⁰

The idea of growth is sometimes opposed or resisted in rural small towns. Local residents and leaders may fear that development will bring a loss of the quality of life they have been enjoying, a disruption in existing relationships, unwelcomed strangers, and noise and traffic. Many of those who advocate development think only of change that sustains the existing community, for example, by providing enough good jobs to keep people, especially young people, around and enough new business and cultural centers to eliminate the need to travel several hours to shop and enjoy other amenities.

The Political Process: Questions of Influence

Rural-urban differences regularly pop up on a variety of issues in the state Legislature. Recently, for example, there have been disputes over whether to count prisoners, when drawing legislative or congressional districts, as part of the population of the towns in which they are located (this is the current practice and it generally benefits rural areas because prisons are commonly located in these places) or as part of the population of their hometown, which is more likely to be in an urban area. Urban-rural divisions on some issues, especially cultural ones concerning such matters as gun control and abortion, are issues that generally divide Republicans from Democrats and are likely to be resolved as party issues. Issues such as how spending for education and roads should be distributed around the state and who should control water resources are more likely to bring an urban-rural split that crosses party lines.

Many of the most pressing problems facing rural local governments are shared by their urban counterparts. Some of these problems though are far more severe for those in rural areas. Thus, as noted earlier, while local governments in rural areas are in the same boat with local government in urban areas when it comes to state cuts of funds for road maintenance and repair, the loss is likely to be especially difficult to bear for smaller units in rural areas because they generally have a smaller tax base and are less able than those in urban areas to find alternative sources of revenue. Given their lack of financial resources, rural local governments are also especially hard hit by unfunded state mandates requiring them to undertake expensive functions. They too have the right to be especially fearful of losing shared revenues coming from the state, which, as League of Arizona Cities and Towns officials have noted, constitute from 40% to 70% of their general funds.²¹ The loss could occur as part of a general cutback or an action directed

at them individually should they be found to have done something that conflicts with state law as provided under SB 1487, adopted by the state Legislature in 2016.

SB 1487 has constituted a considerable threat to small rural local governments. In 2018, the town officials of Bisbee, with some 5,000 people, decided not to challenge the attorney general's decision that the town's ban on plastic bags had violated state law because a challenge risked the town losing some \$2 million in state revenues, about a fourth of its annual budget. Bisbee Mayor David Smith was quoted as saying: "The state was basically extorting us, saying that we either had to repeal this ordinance or lose our state-sharing revenues. ... That would have literally bankrupted the city."²² It is also very expensive for small rural localities to defend themselves from such charges. The financial threat created by SB 1487 can be a strong deterrent to innovation and experimentation, especially on the part of smaller units with limited finances.

Overall, one finds mixed indicators when it comes to the influence of rural areas in state politics. Statewide elections information examined for this report suggests that there may not be as much of a disparity between the urban and rural vote as one might have anticipated. Looking at 84 contests for governor, U.S. Senate, and other statewide offices going back to 1974, the combined vote in Maricopa and Pima, the urban counties, and the combined vote in the remaining rural counties were in agreement 64 times when it came to which candidate was favored, indicating a high level of agreement (76%). When there has been division, urban areas have often but not always come out on top. In 13 of the 20 cases where there was disagreement, the vote in the urban counties generally produced a victor not supported by a majority of the voters in rural areas. In seven contests (about 8% of the total examined), the rural county vote produced a winning candidate not favored by the urban county vote.²³ One of the most important of these instances occurred in 2016 when Donald Trump carried Arizona – he lost the combined vote in the two urban counties by 13,000 votes but carried the remaining 13 lightly populated rural counties by over 104,000 votes.²⁴ Rural areas can make a difference when the urban vote is close and the rural vote is lopsided in favor of a candidate.

While information on overall trends and patterns is lacking, some indication of how state spending is distributed between urban and rural areas is found in the annual reports made by the Joint Legislative Budget Committee on state expenditures going to county governments. State expenditures covered in the September 2018 report amounted to \$1.78 billion and included money from the Vehicle License Tax, the Highway User Revenue Fund, the General Fund for health care, and State Shared Transaction Privilege Tax revenues. As Table 4 indicates, 70.5% of state

Table 4. Distributions of State Funds to Arizona Counties*

County	Millions of Dollars	Share (Percent)
Apache	30.7	1.7
Cochise	40.8	2.3
Coconino	53.8	3.0
Gila	19.2	1.1
Graham	13.8	0.8
Greenlee	10.3	0.6
La Paz	10.8	0.6
Maricopa	990.3	55.6
Mohave	60.5	3.4
Navajo	44.1	2.5
Pima	264.8	14.9
Pinal	93.8	5.3
Santa Cruz	17.9	1.0
Yavapai	72.0	4.0
Yuma	54.8	3.1
Not Yet Determined	3.5	0.2
Total Distributions	1,781.2	100.0

*Note: Numbers do not add due to rounding. Source: Arizona Joint Legislative Budget Committee, "Selected State Expenditures on Counties: Program Summary," updated September 12, 2018, <https://www.azleg.gov/jlbc/stateexpbycounties.pdf>.

spending for these programs went to Maricopa and Pima counties and 29.5% to rural counties. This is a bit low for urban counties and a bit high for rural ones when measured against the estimated distribution of the population in 2018 of 76% urban and 24% rural. Many of the funds covered in this report, as well as those coming from other state programs such as in the area of education are primarily allocated on the basis of population or the number of people in a program. This boosts the amount going to urban areas. Still, rural areas are not altogether left out, and often benefit from considerations other than population. It also may be true that people in urban areas pay more in taxes than they receive in state services and, in effect, fund services for rural areas. Researchers have found this pattern in several states, including Georgia, Indiana, Minnesota, and Wisconsin.²⁵

When it comes to the state Legislature, there are factors or forces working both against and for rural interests. In Arizona as elsewhere continued urbanization can be said to have contributed to a decline of rural representation in the

Legislature. The rural population is now found in significant numbers in only a few of the state's legislative districts (see Table 5). Of the 30 districts, only one, District 7 in Apache and Navajo counties, has a predominately rural population, being a bit more than 60% rural. This district is 67% Native American. In only three others (Districts 1, 6, and 14) does the rural population exceed 30%. The urban percentage is over 90% in 20 districts and is 100% in five districts. Under the legislative districts now in place, 65 of the 90 legislators, 72% of the total members, come from the urban counties, Maricopa (53 members, 59%) and Pima (12 members, 13%).²⁶ Legislators can be expected to pay special attention to their own constituents and in most cases these people are urbanites.

Representing rural areas has also become increasingly more difficult because the districts in which rural citizens are found have regularly been expanded through the redistricting process, which takes place every 10 years, to cover more and more territory. Rural counties have had to be lumped together in much larger legislative districts, sometimes along with portions of urban counties, to make sure the districts are roughly the same as other districts in terms of population. The larger geographical size makes it more difficult for representatives to stay in touch with constituents and the mixture of urban and rural populations in the same district dilutes the rural input.²⁷ These difficulties in rural representation are likely to be exacerbated with new district lines following the 2020 census.

Arizona has had a long line of rural champions in the Legislature, working to increase the economic prosperity and welfare of small rural communities. One thinks, for example, of John Hays, a rancher from Prescott who put in 16 years starting in the mid 1970s; Bill Hardt, a legislator from the Globe-Miami area who was first elected in 1966 and went on to serve 30 years; Jack Brown, a rancher from St. Johns in Apache County who held legislative office for 36 years; Polly Rosenbaum, a lawmaker from Globe who set the record, serving from 1949 to 1994. Many of these and other legislators from rural areas enjoyed positions of leadership and exercised considerable clout. Voters in rural districts traditionally have elected and re-elected legislators over a long period of time so that their representatives eventually gravitate into positions of influence.²⁸ The ability to build up longevity, however, has been made more difficult by the adoption of term limits in 1992.

Another factor that has negatively affected the desire of incumbents to seek re-election, one that has been of special concern to those from rural areas, has been the high cost of financing travel to the state Capitol in Phoenix and finding housing in the area while the Legislature is in session. This may amount to five or six months. The problem has been made worse in recent years by changes in federal tax law

Table 5. Arizona Legislative Districts 2013, Percent Urban

District	Percent Urban Population
1 Prescott-Yavapai County-New River	69.39
2 Green Valley-Tucson South East	87.55
3 Tucson West-Three Points	97.00
4 Maricopa County Southwest-Yuma	82.84
5 Mohave County-La Paz County	74.49
6 Flagstaff-Coconino County	68.19
7 Apache County-Navajo County	38.49
8 Pinal County-San Tan Valley	71.08
9 Tucson North	99.64
10 Pima County East-Tanque Verde	98.06
11 Maricopa-Oro Valley	80.02
12 Gilbert-Queen Creek	98.87
13 Maricopa County Southwest-Yuma County	79.77
14 Cochise County,-Graham County, Greenlee County, parts of Pima County	62.73
15 Phoenix North-East-Deer Valley	98.88
16 Apache Junction-Mesa East	98.21
17 Chandler-Sun Lakes	99.99
18 Mesa South-West-Ahwatukee	100.00
19 Avondale-Tolleson	99.97
20 Phoenix North-West-Moon Valley	100.00
21 El Mirage-Peoria-Sun City	99.90
22 Surprise-Maricopa County North-Central	95.64
23 Fountain Hills Scottsdale	93.50
24 Phoenix East-Scottsdale South	100.00
25 Mesa	99.78
26 Tempe-Mesa	98.59
27 Phoenix Downtown-Laveen-Guadalupe	98.44
28 Phoenix East-Paradise Valley	100.00
29 Glendale-Maryvale	99.98
30 Glendale-Phoenix West	100.00

Source: "2013 State Legislative Districts," Proximity One, <http://proximityone.com/sld2013.htm>.

that limits the ability of legislators to deduct travel and living expenses from their federal taxes.²⁹

On the plus side, the number of legislators who are tied in one way or another to rural interests seems to have held constant over the last several decades and many continue to gravitate to positions of legislative leadership even though the rural population has declined. In 1985, leaders of the American Farm Bureau reported that there were at least a dozen legislators with ties to farming and ranching.³⁰ Recent counts and estimates are similar if not higher.³¹ There are still a number of legislators with rural ties and values, including Senate President Karen Fann (R-District 1), who are in leadership positions. From time to time, rural caucuses have also been formed in the Legislature in an effort to strengthen the focus on rural problems. Currently, a bipartisan group of 10 to 15 members meets regularly in the House to develop and promote a rural agenda.³² Many more legislators may come on board on specific issues, sharing with rural representatives property rights beliefs and the belief that farming, ranching, and mining are vital to the economic health of the state. Rural spokespersons point out that agriculture and extractive industries have a \$34.3 billion yearly impact on Arizona's economy.³³

Rural legislators, moreover, are not alone in terms of group support. We find the economic interests in rural areas being advanced by associations representing farmers, ranchers, cotton growers, and the mining industry, and the general interests of rural local governments as well as urban local governments, are being championed by the League of Arizona Cities and Towns and the Arizona Association of Counties. Around the country we find rural legislators sometimes finding allies with suburban or central city legislators. Financially pressed central Arizona cities and small towns, for example, sometimes align themselves against wealthy suburbs on questions of state aid for education.³⁴ Individual members of the majority party, including champions of rural interests, also may have considerable ability to influence policy when party leaders need the votes of all or nearly all of party members in the House or Senate. This situation may give rural representatives considerable bargaining power.³⁵

Rural representatives have found political party ties useful in their efforts to do something for people in their districts. In Arizona, as elsewhere, it has made strategic sense for Republican leaders over the last several decades to steer resources into rural areas, be it funds or something as simple as special tax rates for farm equipment. Party ties, however, don't always work. As a rural legislator in Colorado once noted: "It's funny, but sometimes the people in my own party are the ones I have the most trouble with. ... Their

perspective is, 'You choose to live out there, so you deal with those issues because that's your choice. I shouldn't be subsidizing anything you do out there.'³⁶

In Arizona several years ago, some Republican representatives from rural areas where unemployment was more than 20% fell out with their Republican colleagues on the question of extending federal unemployment benefits. They took issue with party colleagues who argued extending benefits was unnecessary spending, which only helped those who were gaming the system and really not interested in finding work. The rural representatives, though conservatives, felt this was a time when a genuine problem existed – there were no jobs, people were suffering – and ideology should be set aside in the interest of addressing constituent needs. They were, however, unsuccessful, being unable to win over others in their party.³⁷

Party lines are important but may be broken by constituency concerns. One of the more essential tasks of rural representatives is educating urban legislators, including members of their own political party, about rural conditions and how proposed measures might affect things in rural areas. This is needed in the words of one rural legislator because: "They really don't know. They don't understand."³⁸

Summing Up: Recognizing Synergy

Arizona is not unique when it comes to rural complaints about urban domination. Recently, for example, a rural legislator in Nevada declared: "Las Vegas wants everything, and they don't care about the rurals."³⁹ Clark County, where Las Vegas is located, has better than 70% of the state's population. Scholars have long noted how the political characteristics of a state political system are deeply influenced by the presence or absence of a large and at

least potentially dominant city or county.⁴⁰

It is fair to say that rural areas, despite population losses, are far from powerless in Arizona state politics. Rural people do, however, continue to have reason to be concerned about decisions affecting their water supply, roads, schools, health care, and economic development. By many measurements they are worse off than urban residents. Several groups and observers have long expressed their concern about these disparities and have seen the need to funnel more resources to rural places. For example, a group of citizens and experts gathered by Arizona Town Hall concluded in 2001: "Many areas outside of Maricopa and Pima Counties, in particular, suffer from higher unemployment and poverty rates. Needed resources should be directed to rural areas based on need rather than traditional allocation methods such as population or mileage statistics. Plans for development of Arizona's rural economy must recognize the diversity that characterizes our state."⁴¹ State funding can be equitable in terms of population but at the same time be inadequate in terms of need.

Rural needs are real but solutions to these problems do not necessarily come at the expense of urban areas. In recent years more and more attention has been given to the synergy between rural and urban areas. In many important respects, what is good for one region is also good for the other. Studies in Minnesota and California, for example, indicate that improved prosperity in rural areas can lead to substantial economic benefits in urban regions.⁴² While urban-rural conflict is probably inevitable – there is only so much money and so much water – there is hope for rural areas with the recognition that in many respects both regions need each other and are tied together when it comes to prosperity and improving the quality of life. As a recent study has suggested: "It's time for the narrative to change from urban vs. rural to a shared economic future."⁴³

Notes

¹ See Janet Adamy and Paul Overberg, “Rural America is the New ‘Inner City,’” *The Wall Street Journal*, May 26, 2017, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/rural-america-is-the-new-inner-city-1495817008>.

² See Michelle Wilde Anderson, “The New Minimal Cities,” *Yale Law Journal* 123, no. 5 (March 2014): 1118-1227. See also “State Strategies to Detect Local Fiscal Distress,” The Pew Charitable Trusts, posted September 15, 2016, <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/reports/2016/09/state-strategies-to-detect-local-fiscal-distress>. For an account of the problems faced by isolated small towns and an analysis of why some have survived and some have failed, see Gerald L. Gordon, *The Economic Survival of America’s Isolated Small Towns* (Boca Raton: CRC Press, 2015). For an overview of conditions, see A.G. Sulzberger, “Rural Legislators’ Power Ebbs as Populations Shift,” *The New York Times*, June 2, 2011, <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/03/us/03rural.html>.

³ The author interviewed mayors or council people from the following Arizona towns for this study: Bisbee, Kingman, Lake Havasu City, Page, Springerville, St. Johns, and Williams. Several of these interviews took place in Tucson during the annual conference of the Arizona League of Cities and Towns on August 22, 2019. The author also wishes to thank Arizona League of Cities and Towns Executive Director Ken Strobeck and Rep. Becky Nutt for providing their insights. In addition, the author has drawn upon interviews with state and local officials conducted for earlier studies and some of the work found in his book *Arizona Politics and Government*, published in 1998 by the University of Nebraska Press.

⁴ The U.S. Census Bureau looks at the rural population as that which is not included in what it considers to be the urban population. The definition of urban has changed over the years. Initially, any settlement of 2,500 or more was considered urban – below that number it became rural. From 1950 to 1990, urban was defined as consisting of urbanized areas, densely settled areas of 50,000 or more people, and urban clusters, incorporated places of 2,500 or more people outside of an urbanized area. Starting with the 2000 census, the definition of an urban area was broadened through the use of population density data, based on the number of people per square mile in each census block, the smallest geographic units employed by the Bureau. As a result of the changing definitions, the figures for the rural population are not directly comparable over the years. Under a measurement developed by the federal Office of Management and Budget (OMB), all counties that are not part of a metropolitan area (a place with an urban core of 50,000 or more) are considered rural. This measurement comes up with a smaller rural population than does the method currently employed by the Census Bureau. On OMB’s list of rural or Non-Metropolitan Counties in Arizona are Apache, Gila, Graham, Greenlee, La Paz, Navajo, and Santa Cruz. See “Defining Rural Population,” U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration, last reviewed December 2018, <https://www.hrsa.gov/rural-health/about-us/definition/index.html>. See also “Rural Classifications: Overview,” U.S. Department of

Agriculture Economic Research Service, last updated Oct. 23, 2019, <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/rural-economy-population/rural-classifications.aspx>.

⁵ Ross R. Rice, “Recent Legislative Politics in Arizona,” *Western Political Quarterly* 17, no. 3 (October 1, 1964): 69.

⁶ Author’s interview with Bill Hardt, Arizona State Senator, May 28, 1985.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ James Reichley, “The Political Containment of the Cities,” in *The States and the Urban Crisis*, ed. Alan K. Campbell (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1970), 173.

⁹ Joseph W. Sullivan, “Anguish in Arizona, Supreme Court’s Districting Edict has State in Uproar,” *The Wall Street Journal*, August 20, 1964, 12.

¹⁰ “Jack Williams Dies; Oversaw Remake of State,” *Arizona Capitol Times*, August 28, 1998, 2, 7; “John Haugh and the GOP Takeover,” *Arizona Capitol Times*, July 12, 1996, 3.

¹¹ Speech on behalf of older adults living in Northern Arizona, found in a Northern Arizona University’s John Wettaw Collection, Special Collections, Box 2, scrap book. At the time he was sponsoring several measures promoting health care in the area. See “Rep. John Wettaw Gives Legislative Report in Talk Before Holbrook Club,” *The (Holbrook, AZ) Tribune News*, June 9, 1977, 14.

¹² On these points, see Katherine J. Cramer, *The Politics of Resentment: Rural Consciousness in Wisconsin and the Rise of Scott Walker* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016); see also Jose A. Del Real and Scott Clement, “The Rural Divide,” *The Washington Post*, June 17, 2017, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/apps/g/page/national/washington-post-kaiser-family-foundation-rural-and-small-town-america-poll/2217/> (providing a discussion of a Washington Post-Kaiser Family Foundation rural and small-town America survey project and a link to the survey).

¹³ One currently finds Republicans surpassing Democrats in eight of the 15 counties, including Maricopa, in terms of party registration. On the other hand, Democrats surpass Republicans in Pima County and the rural counties of Apache, Coconino, Greenlee, Navajo, Santa Cruz, and Yuma. One finds strong partisan contrasts with Democrat-leaning Santa Cruz County on one end and Republican-leaning Mohave County on the other. See discussion by Alden Woods, “In Rural Arizona, the Reddest of Reds and the Bluest of Blues,” *The Arizona Republic*, November 2, 2016, 13A. While registration may show the partisan and ideological bias of county voters, voting outcomes may be greatly conditioned by the actions of independent voters of which there are a large number in the state and a number of other factors (e.g., the quality of the candidates and their campaigns).

¹⁴ See, for example, “Are Arizona’s Rural Schools in a State of Emergency?” *Arizona Education News Service*, June 14, 2017, <https://azednews.com/arizonas-rural-schools-state-emergency/>; Lily Altavena, “Rural AZ schools feel declining-enrollment squeeze,” *The Arizona Republic*, August 4, 2019, 1A.

¹⁵ See remarks of Don German, executive director of the Arizona Rural Schools Association in “Are Arizona’s Rural Schools in a State of Emergency?” (n. 15). Said German: “ESAs are not beneficial to rural Arizona because there is no other choice for most students than their local public school, so funding to make it the best possible place for an education should be a priority.” A similar position can be found in rural newspaper editorials. See, for example, “Legislator serving special interests first with bill,” *Green Valley News*, February 6, 2019, https://www.gvnews.com/opinion/editorial-legislator-serving-special-interests-first-with-bill/article_2cc6d896-29b6-11e9-b76e-cfd74e52ec78.html. This editorial, which originally appeared in the *Sierra Vista Herald*, declared: “In rural areas like Cochise County, our problem is diverting desperately needed state funding away from public schools to fund private and parochial schools.” Another editorial, “Opportunity Lost,” *Eastern Arizona Courier*, May 9, 2019, https://www.eacourier.com/opinion/editorials/editorial-opportunity-lost/article_ed03f06e-71d5-11e9-b533-b3f259a37bbb.html, directed against “the Legislature’s repeated effort to take tax dollars out of public school to fund for-profit and parochial schools (via empowerment scholarships, also known as the voucher program),” contending “local public school districts tend to spend money responsibly — paying teachers, buying supplies and textbooks, and making the best effort to reduce class size.” Summing up the situation, the 2017 report of Arizona Town Hall concluded that in many rural communities, “‘school choice’ is often a fallacy, because there is only one school.” See “Funding PreK-12 Education: 110th Arizona Town Hall Final Report,” November 2017, 13, <http://www.aztownhall.org/resources/Documents/110%20Funding%20preK-12%20Education%20Final%20Report%20web.pdf>.

¹⁶ See commentary from the Kearney Mayor Sam Hosler, “Mayor’s Corner – Tackling Issues for Rural Arizona,” April 13, 2016, <http://www.copperarea.com/pages/mayors-corner-tackling-issues-rural-arizona>.

¹⁷ Ken Strobeck, “Booming economy brings jobs, a vibrant lifestyle to Arizona,” *Arizona Capitol Times*, July 12, 2019, <https://azcapitoltimes.com/news/2019/07/12/booming-economy-brings-jobs-a-vibrant-lifestyle-to-arizona/comment-page-1/>.

¹⁸ See the following report by national transportation research nonprofit: TRIP, *Rural Connections Report: Challenges and Opportunities in America’s Heartland*, May 22, 2019, https://tripnet.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Rural_Roads_TRIP_Report_May_2019.pdf.

¹⁹ Useful information on rural needs in regard to transportation is found in “Transportation and Arizona: 106th Arizona Town Hall Final Report,” April 2015, <http://aztownhall.org/resources/Documents/106%20Transportation%20and%20Arizona%20FINAL%20Report%20web.pdf>.

²⁰ See discussion by Karl F. Kohlhoff, “Urban Use of Arizona

Rural Ground Water,” *Journal American Water Works Association* 80, no. 3 (March 1988): 46-50.

²¹ Jeremy Duda, “Local Governments fear changes to shared-revenue formula,” *Arizona Capitol Times*, February 5, 2010, 15.

²² Quoted in Scott Rodd, “Banning the Bans: State and Local Officials Clash Over Plastic Bags,” *Stateline*, January 29, 2018, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/banning-the-bans-state-and-local-officials-clash-over_b_5a6f39abe4b0290826014b13; See also Dustin Gardiner, “Bisbee will appease state by repealing plastic-bag ban,” *The Arizona Republic*, November 1, 2017, 1A.

²³ This analysis is based on a data set developed by former Morrison Institute for Public Policy Senior Policy Analyst Dan Hunting.

²⁴ Official voting information provided by the Arizona Secretary of State.

²⁵ For accounts of recent studies, see Nathan Arnosti and Amy Liu, “Why rural America needs cities,” Brookings, posted November 30, 2018, <https://www.brookings.edu/research/why-rural-america-needs-cities/>; Scott Olson, “Study: Urban tax money subsidizes rural counties,” *Indiana Business Journal*, January 12, 2010, <https://www.ibj.com/articles/15690-study-urban-tax-money-subsidizes-rural-counties>; Jeff Hargarten and Matt DeLong, “Metro vs. outstate: Which counties pay most taxes and which get most aid?” *The (Minneapolis) Star Tribune*, January 23, 2015, <http://www.startribune.com/metro-vs-outstate-which-counties-pay-most-taxes-and-which-get-most-aid/289629981/>.

²⁶ Information based on official legislative biographies and various bibliographical internet sources.

²⁷ Several years ago, political scientist Malcolm E. Jewell foresaw these problems in representation and suggested that they were likely to generate pressure for the enlargement of state legislatures. See Malcolm E. Jewell, “The Political Setting,” in *State Legislatures in American Politics*, ed. Alexander Heard (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1966), 82.

²⁸ Interview by the author with Jack Brown, April 10, 2003.

²⁹ Currently the per diem figure for those from outside Maricopa is set at \$60 and \$30 for those who live within the county. In 2019, Gov. Doug Ducey vetoed legislation that would increase these figures to \$190 and \$92.50 respectively. Though sympathetic to the special burden placed on rural legislators, the governor objected to upping the per diem amount for legislators living in the county who did not need to find housing and to the provision of the law that would have immediately helped the legislators who voted for it, rather than taking effect after the election of the next Legislature. For background, see Howard Fischer, “Ducey vetoes bills on criminal justice, legislator pay,” *Casa Grande Dispatch*, June 8, 2019, https://www.pinalcentral.com/arizona_news/ducey-vetoes-bills-on-criminal-justice-legislator-pay/article_028d804d-3b9d-5d05-ad96-a22dde931ba1.html; Julia Shumway and Ben Giles, “Legislature to introduce bill for hefty per diem increase for rural lawmakers,” *Arizona Capitol Times*,

May 23, 2019, <https://azcapitoltimes.com/news/2019/05/23/legislature-to-introduce-bill-for-hefty-per-diem-increase-for-rural-lawmakers/>; Rachel Leingang, "Late bill could boost legislators' incomes by more than \$100 per day for expenses," *The Arizona Republic*, May 24, 2019, 5A.

³⁰ Guy Webster, "State's 'Mr. Agriculture': Federation chief promotes growers as point man of issues," *The Arizona Republic*, August 25, 1985, 1E.

³¹ Telephone interview with Rep. Becky Nutt, August 30, 2019.

³² Ibid.

³³ "Guess What 2018 Candidates Are Saying about Arizona Agriculture," Arizona Farm Bureau, posted October 2, 2018, <https://www.azfb.org/Article/Guess-What-2018-Candidates-Are-Saying-about-Arizona-Agriculture>.

³⁴ See, for example, Alan Greenblatt, "Rural Areas Lose People But Not Power," *Governing*, April 2014, <https://www.governing.com/topics/politics/gov-rural-areas-lose-people-not-power.html>.

³⁵ See Howard Fischer, "Slim GOP majority in Arizona House presents challenge to new leadership," *Arizona Daily Star*, November 7, 2018, https://tucson.com/news/local/slim-gop-majority-in-arizona-house-presents-challenge-to-new/article_396222fa-0b63-5e04-ace5-8694b37625c7.html.

³⁶ Mark Wolf, "Rural Legislators Dig In," *State Legislatures Magazine*, May 2014, [http://www.ncsl.org/research/agriculture-](http://www.ncsl.org/research/agriculture-and-rural-development/rural-legislators-dig-in.aspx)

[and-rural-development/rural-legislators-dig-in.aspx](http://www.ncsl.org/research/agriculture-and-rural-development/rural-legislators-dig-in.aspx).

³⁷ See Caitlin Coakley Beckner, "Rural GOP legislators torn between ideology and helping jobless constituents," *Arizona Capitol Times*, June 20, 2011, <https://azcapitoltimes.com/news/2011/06/20/rural-gop-legislators-torn-between-ideology-and-helping-jobless-constituents/>.

³⁸ Remarks of Rep. Drew John in Eric Petermann, "Rural interests drive state lawmakers," *Eastern Arizona Courier*, June 26, 2017, https://www.eacourier.com/news/rural-interests-drive-state-lawmakers/article_f5253ebc-5a10-11e7-9b8b-97387f9ce916.html.

³⁹ Greenblatt, "Rural Areas Lose People But Not Power" (n. 35)

⁴⁰ See, for example, Harlan Hahn, *Urban-Rural Conflict, The Politics of Change* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1971).

⁴¹ "78th Arizona Town Hall: Moving All of Arizona into the 21st Century Economy," Arizona Town Hall, May 2001, <http://www.aztownhall.org/page-1351256>; See also Tara Teichgraeber, "Town Hall pushes tech for urban and rural Arizona," *The (Phoenix) Business Journal*, May 18, 2001, 20.

⁴² Christiana K. McFarland, *Bridging the Urban-Rural Economic Divide*, National League of Cities, 2018, <https://www.nlc.org/sites/default/files/2018-03/nlc-bridging-the-urban-rural-divide.pdf>.

⁴³ Ibid., 4.

About the Author



David R. Berman is a professor emeritus of political science at Arizona State University and a longtime associate of the Morrison Institute for Public Policy. He began his professional career with the National League of Cities and for several years authored a report on state-local relations for the Municipal Year Book, which is published by the International City/County Management Association. He has also worked with the National Conference of State Legislatures and the former U.S. Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations. He received his doctorate from American University. He has authored 11 books and numerous papers, book chapters, and refereed articles dealing with state and local government, politics, and public policy. In 2019, Routledge published the second edition of his book *Local Government and the States: Autonomy, Politics, and Public Policy* and University Press of Colorado published his newest book, *Governors and the Progressive Movement*.