

BOARD OF  
**Regents**



ARIZONA'S PUBLIC  
UNIVERSITIES

## News Release

March 4, 2016

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

EDUCATE • DISCOVER • IMPACT

Contact: Sarah Harper, (602) 402-1341, sarah.k.harper@azregents.edu

Julie Newberg, (602) 686-1803, julie.newberg@azregents.edu

### **ABOR Votes to Oppose Bills Regarding Regent Term Limits, Free Speech Zones**

(Phoenix, Ariz.) – The Arizona Board of Regents today voted to oppose current legislative bills affecting the board and Arizona's public universities, including bills that would shorten regents' term lengths and permit the superintendent of public instruction to authorize a designee to serve in their place on the board.

The board opposed HB 2346, which would authorize the superintendent of public instruction, an ex-officio member of the board, to designate an individual of their choosing to participate as a voting member of the board of regents. "As set forth in our state constitution, the superintendent is expressly seated as a regent and active engagement under this structure is welcomed," said Arizona Board of Regents Chair Jay Heiler.

The board also opposed HB 2479 which would shorten the term length of a regent from eight to four years. "Being a strong leader for this very complex public higher education enterprise is a significant responsibility," said Regent Rick Myers. "It takes dedication and time to fully appreciate and learn the complexities of our university enterprise and thereby make sound policy and fiscal decisions on behalf of the state and the public that we serve."

The board also opposed the amended version of HB 2548 that would modify the penalty process for individuals who believe their freedom of speech rights were violated on a public postsecondary campus by being relegated to a designated free-speech zone. Arizona's public universities do not have designated free-speech zones since entire campuses are open for the exercise of free speech. The board opposed the amended bill and HB 2615 as amended that would establish a new free-speech section of Arizona law, based on the U.S. Constitution, Arizona Constitution and current state law, which all provide for the protection of free speech.

"These bills are attempting to offer a solution to a problem we do not have at our universities," Heiler said. "One of the inalienable rights afforded to all in our country is freedom of speech, and we do not attempt to curtail this right on our campuses. I am proud that our state's three public universities – Arizona State University, Northern Arizona University and the University of Arizona have not created 'zones.' The board's vision for our universities is to uphold freedom of speech in an intentional culture of learning, discovery, reasoned debate and good will."

The board also voted to oppose the following bills: SB 1389 – regarding student and teacher data; and SB 1418 – regarding proposed fees for archeological discoveries and preservation efforts performed by the State Museum.

# # #

*The Arizona Board of Regents is committed to ensuring access for qualified residents of Arizona to undergraduate and graduate instruction; promoting the discovery, application, and dissemination of new knowledge; extending the benefits of university activities to Arizona's citizens outside the university; and maximizing the benefits derived from the state's investment in education. For more information visit [AZRegents.edu](http://AZRegents.edu).*

