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Secretary of State Adrian Fontes*

**SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF ARIZONA  
IN AND FOR THE COUNTY OF MARICOPA**

REPUBLICAN NATIONAL  
COMMITTEE, REPUBLICAN PARTY  
OF ARIZONA, LLC, and YAVAPAI  
COUNTY REPUBLICAN PARTY,  
  
Plaintiffs,  
  
v.  
  
ADRIAN FONTES, in his official  
capacity as Arizona Secretary of State;  
  
Defendant.

No: CV2024-050553  
  
**ARIZONA SECRETARY OF  
STATE'S REPLY IN SUPPORT OF  
MOTION TO DISMISS**  
  
(Assigned to the Hon. Frank Moskowitz)

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1 Defendant Secretary of State Adrian Fontes respectfully requests that this Court  
2 dismiss Plaintiffs' Verified Complaint pursuant to Ariz. R. Civ. P. 12(b)(1) and (6).

3 **INTRODUCTION**

4 The Consolidated Response and Reply ("Response") filed by Plaintiffs the  
5 Republican National Committee, the Republican Party of Arizona, LLC, and the Yavapai  
6 County Republican Party (collectively, "Plaintiffs") is insufficient to justify their  
7 sweeping requested relief, whether against the entire Elections Procedures Manual  
8 ("EPM") or its discrete provisions. The statute empowering the Secretary to promulgate  
9 the EPM in conjunction with multiple other parties provides the only procedure for  
10 promulgating a valid EPM. Moreover, the expansion of the EPM is a direct result of the  
11 legislature's continued reliance on—and expansion of—the topics that are entrusted to  
12 the experts in election administration who create the EPM. Furthermore, the individual  
13 rules that Plaintiffs challenge are valid and should not be struck down.

14 **I. Plaintiffs Lack Standing to Maintain this Action.**

15 Plaintiffs have not met Arizona's standing requirement here. Plaintiffs' response  
16 to the arguments raised in the Secretary's Consolidated Motion to Dismiss and Response  
17 to Motion for Preliminary Injunction ("Motion") boils down to the fact that they are a  
18 recognized political party in Arizona. (Resp. 29). This fact is uncontested, but it is  
19 insufficient to confer standing. "To gain standing to bring an action, a plaintiff must  
20 allege a distinct and palpable injury. An allegation of generalized harm that is shared  
21 alike by all . . . generally is not sufficient to confer standing." *Sears v. Hull*, 192 Ariz.  
22 65, 69, ¶ 16 (1998).

23 Plaintiffs' argument that because the violation of an EPM provision is a crime and  
24 "the conduct of persons campaigning, voting, observing, administering, and reporting on  
25 elections is governed by the EPM," then they have a distinct and palpable injury, is  
26 incorrect. (Resp. 29). As explained in the Motion, the EPM generally governs the  
27 actions of election officials, not political parties, candidates, or voters. Plaintiffs'  
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1 generalized, self-serving claim of an interest in imposing their preferred policy choices  
2 through the EPM is not enough when that is the same kind of harm any member of the  
3 general public may allege. *Arcadia Osborn Neighborhood v. Clear Channel Outdoor,*  
4 *LLC*, 256 Ariz. 88 at ¶ 29 (App. 2023). Similarly, the claim of diversion of resources by  
5 organizations has been disclaimed by Arizona courts, to “prevent[] parties from  
6 eviscerating the standing requirement by merely asserting an interest.” *Ariz. Sch. Bds.*  
7 *Ass’n., Inc. v. State*, 252 Ariz. 219, 224 ¶ 18 (2022) (citations omitted).

8 The allegation that they are parties “who [are] or may be affected by a rule”  
9 likewise does not meet the standing requirement. (Resp. 29). As an initial matter,  
10 because the EPM was promulgated pursuant to A.R.S. §16-452, not Arizona’s  
11 Administrative Procedures Act (“APA”), A.R.S. § 41-1034, the section upon which  
12 Plaintiffs rely for providing standing, does not apply. *See State Tax Comm’n v. Wallapai*  
13 *Brick & Clay Products, Inc.*, 85 Ariz. 23, 29 (1958) (explaining that A.R.S. § 41-1034  
14 provides plaintiffs with the ability to pursue a declaratory judgment against a rule  
15 adopted under the APA). Moreover, the EPM binds election officials, not the parties.  
16 Because the APA does not apply, the Plaintiffs do not have standing to seek a declaratory  
17 judgment to enjoin the EPM.

18 Plaintiffs also argue they have a “beneficial[] interest[] in compelling the  
19 Secretary to perform his legal duty consistent with statute” as sufficient to confer  
20 standing. (Resp. 31). This argument relies upon *Ariz. Public Integrity All. v. Fontes*, 250  
21 Ariz. 58 (2020). But that case explicitly and expressly applied “a more relaxed standard  
22 for standing in mandamus actions.” *Id.* at ¶ 11. This is not a mandamus action.  
23 Accordingly, Plaintiffs must meet the traditional standing requirements and “allege a  
24 distinct and palpable injury” to have standing to bring a lawsuit. *Sears*, 192 Ariz. At 69,  
25 ¶ 16. They have failed to do so, and this Court should dismiss this case.

1       **II. The 2023 EPM Is Valid.**

2       **A. The Length of Prior EPMs Is Irrelevant and Misleading.**

3       Plaintiffs begin with a recitation of the statutory history of A.R.S. § 16-452, which  
4 empowers the Secretary of State, in conjunction with many other elected officials—from  
5 Chinle to Yuma, Bisbee to Yucca—to create the EPM. (Resp. 3-4). However, that  
6 recitation quickly gives way to argument which falsely attempts to contrast prior versions  
7 of the EPM with the 2023 EPM. This contrast fails because the legislature has continued  
8 to add more subjects and procedures that must be covered by the EPM since 1996.

9       Plaintiffs compare, for example, the section on voter registration from 1996—  
10 nearly thirty years ago—to the 2023 EPM, without acknowledging the major changes that  
11 have occurred in election law since then. (Resp. 5). For example, Arizona created  
12 secured voter registration the same year the 1996 EPM was promulgated, adopted  
13 documentary proof of citizenship requirements (“DPOC”) by citizens’ initiative in 2004,  
14 created the statewide voter registration database after the 2002 adoption of the Help  
15 America Vote Act (“HAVA”), and adopted the Address Confidentiality Program in 2014.  
16 *See* EPM 2-54. In short, the expansion of the chapter on voter registration is directly  
17 attributable to new laws, at both the state and federal level. It is not, as Plaintiffs argue, a  
18 power grab by the Secretary. (Resp. 2-5).

19       **B. The EPM is Exempt from the APA.**

20       Plaintiffs argue that a “statute’s silence does not exempt the [agency] from the  
21 APA’s rulemaking procedure,” which is correct, but inapposite. (Resp. 6) (quoting *Ariz.*  
22 *State Univ. ex rel. Ariz. Bd. of Regents v. Ariz. State Retirement Sys.* (“*ASU*”), 237 Ariz.  
23 246, 252, ¶ 23 (App. 2015)). The Secretary does *not* argue that the silence of the statute  
24 provides the exemption; it is the provision of an alternative, and distinctly contradictory,  
25 express procedure that exempts the EPM from the APA. (Mot. 5-8). This is unlike the  
26 agency in *ASU*, which adopted a rule in a vacuum, without any direction from the  
27 legislature as to what procedures to follow to make the rule effective. *ASU*, 237 Ariz. at  
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1 252, ¶ 23; *see also Carondelet Health Servs., Inc. v. Ariz. Health Care Cost Containment*  
2 *Sys. Admin.*, 182 Ariz. 221, 228 (App. 1994) (requiring AHCCCS to set rates, providing  
3 no procedural direction for doing so, but referring to “rulemaking” which had previously  
4 been subject to the APA). Unlike the rules in *ASU* and *Carondelet*, the Secretary  
5 followed the express direction of the legislature to promulgate the 2023 EPM, and  
6 therefore, it is valid.

7         The APA is a statutory framework to ensure procedural guardrails on an individual  
8 agency’s rulemaking authority, and the legislature provided similar guardrails in A.R.S. §  
9 16-452. Plaintiffs agree that the legislature “of course is not limited in its placement of  
10 an exemption,” but then argue that because the legislature did not state the exemption that  
11 Plaintiffs prefer, the 2023 EPM is invalid. (Resp. 7). It is the legislature’s provision of  
12 different, contradictory guardrails on the Secretary’s rulemaking authority when he  
13 promulgates the EPM—and *only* the EPM—that serves as the express exemption from  
14 the APA.

15         When Plaintiffs point to other statutes, like A.R.S. § 16-974(D), to support their  
16 argument of what satisfies an express exemption, they overlook the fact that the express  
17 exemptions they identify are a zero-sum alternative; either, the agency is subject to the  
18 APA or it is exempt from the APA. But with A.R.S. § 16-452, the legislature did  
19 something different: it provided a workable framework for promulgating the EPM that  
20 requires input from other officials in crafting such an important set of procedures, without  
21 requiring the application of the APA. At bottom, Plaintiffs’ claim is that the legislature  
22 *should have* used a belt and suspenders approach, by providing a separate and  
23 contradictory framework from the APA *and* expressly using words like “rules adopted  
24 pursuant to this chapter are exempt from title 41, chapters 6 and 6.1.” The law requires  
25 only one exemption from the APA, and that is embodied in A.R.S. § 16-452.

26         Moreover, the legislature has actively increased the scope of the EPM, and never  
27 hinted that the APA controlled by changing the terms of A.R.S. § 16-452. The legislature  
28

1 has added to the Secretary’s authority *at least fourteen times* since 2005, including one  
2 change this year. *See* 2024 Ariz. Leg. Serv. Ch. 79 (S.B. 1342). If the legislature  
3 believed that the Secretary was violating state law, it surely would have said so. Indeed,  
4 the legislature has taken steps in the recent past to address what it viewed as inadequacies  
5 of the procedure for promulgating the EPM. *See, e.g.*, 2019 Ariz. Leg. Serv. Ch. 99  
6 (H.B. 2238) (amending the procedure to produce the EPM to include deadlines to submit  
7 to the attorney general and governor and provide a date by which the EPM must issue).  
8 Notably, this amendment followed many years when no updated EPM was issued.<sup>1</sup> The  
9 legislature’s decision not to change the terms of A.R.S. § 16-452 in the face of this  
10 consistent application, coupled with the legislature’s intentional expansion of the subjects  
11 governed by the EPM, all support the Secretary’s position.

12 The APA exists to ensure that a single agency is not the final word on the creation,  
13 implementation, and enforcement of rules, but that concern does not apply to the multi-  
14 party promulgation procedure created by A.R.S. § 16-452. To attack the Secretary’s  
15 argument, Plaintiffs argue that “the APA contemplates—and at times, requires—the  
16 governor’s involvement in rulemakings covered by the APA,” (Resp. 9), then cites  
17 A.R.S. § 41-1052. But this statute only refers to the Governor’s Regulatory Review  
18 Council’s (“GRRC”) review of rules. It is self-evident that GRRC is *not* “the governor.”  
19 Indeed, that agency is not in the office of the governor, either.<sup>2</sup> The participation of  
20 GRRC, like the approval by the attorney general as to form, is very different than the  
21 process here, where the governor is a required *participant* in promulgating the EPM.  
22 (Compl. ¶ 36 (stating that fifteen additional pages, including many of the discrete  
23 contested provisions, were added to the EPM after consultation with the Governor and  
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25 <sup>1</sup> Ariz. Memory Project, Ariz. Elections Procedures Manuals Publication Set, *available at*  
26 <https://azmemory.azlibrary.gov/nodes/view/260970> (showing no EPM was produced  
between 2014 and 2019).

27 <sup>2</sup> *See* Ariz. Governor’s Regulatory Review Council, “FAQ Page” *available at*  
28 <https://grrc.az.gov/about/faq> (providing “Is the Council within the Governor’s Office?  
No. The Council is a division of the Department of Administration.”).

1 Attorney General)). The governor’s participation in this process is another indication that  
2 A.R.S. § 16-452 intended to exempt the EPM from the APA.

3 Plaintiffs also address at length an Attorney General opinion from the 1970s to  
4 support its position that the multi-party nature of the EPM’s promulgating statute does  
5 not reflect the legislative intent to exempt the EPM from the APA, but that is incorrect.  
6 The opinion addresses the effect of a change in the framework applicable to emergency  
7 orders issued by the governor and the department of emergency management, but a  
8 change of promulgating frameworks is not at issue here, because the same one—A.R.S. §  
9 16-452—has always controlled. Moreover, the opinion states that “[w]ith respect to  
10 [rules] made, amended or rescinded by counties or other political subdivision of the state,  
11 A.R.S. § 26-307.B specifies that such a rule ‘is effective when a copy is filed in the office  
12 of the clerk of the political subdivision.’ This procedure pertains only to these entities  
13 and *is an alternative to the APA.*” (Resp. Exh. 1 at 6) (emphasis added). The upshot is  
14 that even the opinion that Plaintiffs cite agrees that statutory language providing an  
15 alternate procedure for promulgating rules exempts those rules from the APA.

### 16 **C. Plaintiffs’ Requested Relief Is Inequitable.**

17 Plaintiffs’ argument that “no inequitable result would come from applying the  
18 APA to the 2023 EPM” because Arizona elections would thus “merely revert to the 2019  
19 EPM” lays bare the true intent of Plaintiffs—to force the adoption of Plaintiffs’ preferred  
20 policy in contravention of the law. (Resp. 14). The 2023 EPM was promulgated using  
21 the same procedure used for every EPM since at least 1993. (Resp. 4). If the 2023 EPM  
22 is invalid because it was not promulgated pursuant to the APA, as Plaintiffs argue, then  
23 the 2019 EPM is invalid for the same reason. The result that Plaintiffs want to elide is  
24 that *no* EPMs would be valid under their theory of the law.

25 Plaintiffs’ remedy would require this Court to graft the APA onto the express  
26 procedure to create the EPM provided by the legislature, but it would also require the  
27 Court to overrule the legislature’s explicit requirement that a host of other procedures in  
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1 statutes throughout Titles 16 and 19 are controlled by the EPM. Such a result, on the eve  
2 of a presidential election in which Arizona may well prove decisive, would be  
3 burdensome to elections officials required to administer the elections, among others.  
4 Moreover, the 2019 EPM is now out of date. There have been numerous statutory  
5 changes and court decisions affecting election law since the 2019 EPM. The argument  
6 that elections officials could just continue to rely on an out of date document, instead of  
7 the current EPM, is wrong and sure to cause confusion on the eve of an upcoming  
8 election. *See Purcell v. Gonzalez*, 549 U.S. 1, 4-5 (2006) (declining to enjoin Arizona’s  
9 voter identification law due to the potential for voter confusion).

10 **D. Waiver and Laches Bar Plaintiffs’ Claims.**

11 Waiver and laches prevent the Plaintiffs from pursuing the APA claim in this  
12 action. While Plaintiffs may not be equitably barred from making claims against rules  
13 that were not officially promulgated, that is not the argument here. Plaintiffs knew that  
14 the Secretary—like every administration before him—would follow the procedure in  
15 A.R.S. § 16-452 in promulgating the EPM, rather than the APA. It further had  
16 confirmation of that fact when the Secretary provided that public comment would be  
17 taken for fifteen days, rather than thirty. (Compl. ¶ 32). Plaintiffs complained of this fact  
18 in their comments, but nonetheless did not bring suit until February. And instead of  
19 contesting specific provisions of the EPM, which may have changed before the final rules  
20 were issued and thus could justify Plaintiffs’ delay, they waited more than *six months*  
21 before suing to void the 2023 EPM in its entirety. The scope of the relief sought weighs  
22 heavily in favor of finding laches and waiver.

23 **III. Plaintiffs’ Claims Against the Individual EPM Provisions Fail.**

24 Unable to completely upend election administration in Arizona by striking the  
25 EPM *in toto*, Plaintiffs are left to nibble around the edges on seven specific provisions of  
26 the 2023 EPM.<sup>3</sup> But, as explained in greater detail in the Motion to Dismiss, Plaintiffs’

27 <sup>3</sup> Plaintiffs Complaint challenges eight provisions of the EPM, but they now concede that  
28 their Count IV, challenging the EPM provisions concerning A.R.S. § 16-127(A)(2),



1 attempt to supplant EPM provisions created through consultation with county election  
2 officials and the multi-agency process described above with their preferred interpretation  
3 of Arizona law does not establish that any of the challenged provisions should be stricken  
4 from the manual.

5 As an initial matter, Plaintiffs’ claims about some of the challenged provisions are  
6 not based on “an actual controversy between the parties.” *Brush & Nib Studio, LC v. City*  
7 *of Phoenix*, 247 Ariz. 269, 280, ¶ 36 (2019); *see also Mills v. Ariz. Bd. of Tech.*  
8 *Registration*, 253 Ariz. 415, 424-25, ¶¶ 29-30 (2022) (conditioning standing to seek  
9 declaratory judgment on “whether an actual controversy exists” because the plaintiff has  
10 a “real and present need” to resolve the case to avoid imminent harm). Several of  
11 Plaintiff’s claims relate to hypothetical future situations, not present controversies. In  
12 particular, Plaintiffs acknowledge that the EPM provision challenged in Count V  
13 accurately reflects what is currently practicable for county election officials. (Resp. at  
14 23). But they assert that “[i]f the databases become available to county recorders while  
15 the 2023 EPM is effective” a conflict will arise between statute and the EPM. (*Id.*) If  
16 that happens, and county recorders do not check the identified databases when  
17 practicable, Plaintiffs can raise that claim. But until then, the claims is not ripe and there  
18 is no justiciable controversy warranting the declaratory relief Plaintiffs seek. Similarly,  
19 Plaintiffs argue that their claim regarding federal-only voters participating in the PPE is  
20 ripe because “there is no guarantee of a new EPM before the next PPE.” (*Id.* at 21).  
21 There is, however, such a guarantee—A.R.S. § 16-452(B). *See Donaldson v. Sisk*, 57  
22 Ariz. 318, 324 (1941) (“It is presumed that every public officer does his duty.”).  
23 Plaintiffs cannot rely on a previous failure to carry out statutory duties to make Count III  
24 anything but a request for an advisory opinion about a future EPM.

25  
26  
27 relating to federal-only voters voting by mail, fails in the face of the district court’s  
28 decision in *Mi Familia Vota v. Fontes*, No. CV-22-00509-PHX-SRB, 2023 WL 8181307,  
at \*7-8 (D. Ariz. Sept. 14, 2023). (Resp. at 21 n.8).

1           **A.     The EPM Is Consistent With A.R.S. § 16-165(A)(10).**

2           Plaintiff’s argument regarding Count II focuses on what constitutes confirmation  
3 of citizenship, but nothing in their argument demonstrates that the EPM’s direction to  
4 county recorders contravenes A.R.S. § 16-165(A)(10). *See, e.g., Leibsohn v. Hobbs*, 254  
5 Ariz. 1, 7, ¶ 22 (2002). The challenged EPM provision instructs county recorders not to  
6 request documentary proof of citizenship from a voter who has already provided DPOC,  
7 because that voter has already established that the voter is a United States citizen. *See*  
8 2023 EPM, at 43. Plaintiffs argue that A.R.S. § 16-165(A)(10) “provides a confirmation  
9 mechanism—a letter requiring submission of DPOC.” (Resp. at 17). But they misread  
10 the statute. A.R.S. § 16-165(A)(10) directs county recorders to send a letter to the  
11 registered voter asking for DPOC only *after* the recorder has “confirm[ed] that the  
12 registrant is not a citizen.” Reviewing their own records showing that the voter provided  
13 DPOC obviates such confirmation. Plaintiffs would have county recorders ignore the  
14 information that they have received directly from voters demonstrating that they are  
15 citizens and instead require them to rely on a summary report from the jury commissioner  
16 that may contain errors or reflect a person’s misguided attempt to avoid serving on a jury.

17           **B.     The EPM Properly Reflects Federal-Only Voters’ Right to Vote in**  
18           **PPEs.**

19           While they acknowledge the effect on one of their claims of the federal court’s  
20 decision in *Mi Familia Vota*, which concluded that the NVRA preempts A.R.S. § 16-  
21 127(A), Plaintiffs argue that with respect to the Presidential Preference Election (“PPE”),  
22 the district court’s determination does not apply because PPEs are not governed by the  
23 U.S. Constitution’s Electors Clause. (Resp. at 20). In addition, they argue that the  
24 selection of delegates to a party’s presidential nominating convention is different from a  
25 primary for another office. (*Id.*). Essentially their argument is that the PPE is not a  
26 presidential election. But that argument has a fatal flaw. A.R.S. § 16-127(A)(1) provides  
27 that federal-only voters are not permitted to vote in “presidential elections.” If the PPE is  
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1 not a presidential election, then A.R.S. § 16-127, by its own terms, does not apply to the  
2 PPE, and Arizona law contains no prohibition on federal-only voters casting PPE ballots.

3 **C. The EPM Does Not Unlawfully Bar Plaintiffs’ Access to Signatures.**

4 Much like the unripe claims discussed above, Plaintiffs’ argument regarding  
5 public access to voter signatures in the voter registration record seems to be merely  
6 theoretical—not a live controversy needing this Court’s resolution. Plaintiffs expound on  
7 the absence of an oxford comma in A.R.S. § 16-168(F) not having the meaning that one  
8 of the Intervenors ascribes to it, but they wholly fail to explain how the EPM bars them or  
9 any other person from accessing voter signatures to which A.R.S. § 16-168(F) says they  
10 are entitled. (Resp. at 24-25). Indeed, Plaintiffs argue that the canons of statutory  
11 construction dictate that “election purposes” in A.R.S. § 16-168(F) must mean  
12 something, but they do not explain what that is. (*Id.*). Nor do they identify any purpose  
13 for which they have been denied access to voter signatures by a county recorder  
14 following the EPM that contravenes A.R.S. § 16-168(F).

15 **D. Voters Temporarily out of State Can Receive an Early Ballot.**

16 With respect to Count VII, Plaintiffs argue that the EPM conflicts with A.R.S.  
17 § 16-544 because it does not require voters on the Active Early Voting List (“AEVL”) to  
18 conduct three separate transactions to have an early ballot sent to a temporary out of state  
19 address on a one-time basis. (Resp. at 25). Plaintiff’s argument, however, completely  
20 ignores the language of the statute, which bars using a non-Arizona address “for the  
21 purpose of the *active early voting list*.” A.R.S. § 16-544(B) (emphasis added). The  
22 statute does not say “for the purpose of early voting.” Accordingly, the EPM provision  
23 that plainly states that an AEVL voter “may not request that ballots be automatically sent  
24 to an out-of-state address for each election,” but allows for a one-time request that will  
25 not change the voter’s address on AEVL is wholly consistent with A.R.S. § 16-544(B).  
26 2023 EPM, at 59.



1 Respectfully submitted this 22nd day of April, 2024.

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4 /s/ Kara Karlson

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