AZPHA

Clean Energy & Public Health

Arizona's Public Policy Choices on Cost, Reliability & Siting

October 5, 2026 Will Humble, MPH AzPHA

Arizona Needs More Electricity

Population growth and new industries add demand

Data centers and advanced manufacturing need substantial power.

Electrification adds demand as vehicles and equipment change.

More supply works alongside efficiency

Arizona needs generation, storage and transmission.

Efficiency and demand flexibility can reduce peak needs.

AzPHA: Don’t Get in the Way of Building More Solar

Electricity Is Public Health Infrastructure

Reliable electricity protects health

Air conditioning keeps homes safer during extreme heat.

Medical equipment and healthcare facilities depend on power.

Affordability determines access

A dependable grid still leaves families at risk if they cannot afford adequate cooling.

Older adults and people with chronic illness can face greater consequences.

AzPHA: Affordable, Reliable Electricity Is Public Health Infrastructure

Higher Bills Squeeze Family Budgets

Energy burden

The share of household income spent on home energy.

The same bill takes a larger share of a smaller income.

The household tradeoffs

Higher bills leave less for food, medications and rent.

Families may reduce cooling, delay repairs or fall behind on bills.

Higher Utility Bills, Harder Choices for Arizona Families

AzPHA: Electricity Rates Are a Public Health Issue

Solar’s Role in Arizona’s Energy Mix

Generation with public health benefits

Solar PV produces electricity without combustion emissions.

It uses little operational water and buys no fuel.

Costs require a whole-system comparison

Compare generation, storage, transmission and reliability costs.

Lower generation costs reach households only when procurement and rates pass those benefits through.

Solar & Storage: Separating Public Health Fact from Fiction

Batteries Move Solar into the Evening

How storage works

Batteries charge when electricity is available.

They discharge as solar output falls and evening cooling demand continues.

Storage has useful limits

Batteries respond quickly to grid changes. A four-hour system supplies its rated output for about four hours, not indefinitely.

[Solar & Storage: Reliability and Battery Storage]

Who Makes Arizona's Energy Decisions?

Legislature and local government

Lawmakers shape statutes, agency authority and public policy.

Local governments review land use and project conditions within their authority.

Az Corporation Commission, utilities and State Land

The ACC regulates investor-owned utility rates and cost allocation.

Utilities plan and procure resources. State Land administers trust-land leases.

AzPHA: Electricity Rates Are a Public Health Issue

State Policy Can Enable Responsible Solar

Barriers deserve scrutiny

2026' HB 2267's introduced language classified utility-scale solar or wind within four miles of homes as a public nuisance.

Broad restrictions can exclude otherwise viable sites.

Watch for bad bills!

AzPHA: Don't Get in the Way of Building More Solar

State trust land is an opportunity

Support the Governor and State Land Department's consideration of suitable long-term solar leases.

Protect trust beneficiaries and encourage compatible agrivoltaics.

Who Pays for New Data-Center Infrastructure?

Costs attributable to the new customer

Additional generation and purchased capacity

Transmission, substations and connection upgrades

Data centers should cover costs they cause

Customer-specific charges and minimum payments

Financial security and cancellation or exit provisions

Cost Shifting Can Harm Community Health

The pathway to household harm

Infrastructure costs enter residential rates.

Higher bills increase energy burden and pressure to reduce cooling.

Pima County's public health lens

Review electricity, water, noise and air pollution.

Examine vulnerable communities and who bears costs.

Pima County's Public Health Lens on Arizona's Data Center Boom

Solar Farms & Data Centers: Siting Decisions

Solar farms supply electricity

Review habitat, land use, drainage and dust.

Assess nearby homes and safe battery placement.

Data centers consume electricity

Review power demand, cooling and water sources.

Assess backup generators, noise and ratepayer exposure.

Solar Farms & Data Centers: Two Different Siting Decisions

Water, Air Quality & Dust

Operating photovoltaic solar

Low operational water demand
No combustion emissions from electricity generation

Project requirements still matter

Dust controls during construction and operation

Drainage, erosion control and maintained ground cover

Solar & Storage: Water and Air Quality

Land Use & Agrivoltaics

Good siting protects nearby communities

Sensitive habitat and wildlife corridors
Agricultural land, setbacks and screening

Agriculture can share suitable solar sites

Grazing or compatible crops can continue.

Arizona research found shade benefits for some crops and water-use efficiency.

University of Arizona: Agrivoltaics Research

Solar & Storage: Land Use and Nearby Homes

Battery Safety Requires Specific Safeguards

The actual hazard

Thermal runaway can produce heat, fire and hazardous gases.

Explosion hazards and exposure require site-specific analysis.

Conditions for project approval

Appropriate separation and setbacks
Test evidence, emergency plans and firefighter coordination

Solar & Storage: Battery Safety

Decommissioning & Site Restoration

Responsibilities begin before construction

Plan for damaged panels, batteries and waste.

Define removal and restoration obligations.

Promises need financial backing

Require adequate financial assurance. Update costs and obligations over the project's life.

Solar & Storage: Materials and Decommissioning

Policy Priorities & Discussion

Arizona's policy priorities

Enable responsible solar and storage. Support suitable state-land leases and agrivoltaics.

Protect households from data-center cost shifting.

Stop harmful siting bills

Questions for the next 15 minutes

What concerns are you hearing in your districts?

Which policy changes would help?

Where can AzPHA provide evidence or testimony?