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Legislative briefing

CAPITOL MEDIA SERVICES

MVD wait-times fine

Motorists stuck in line waiting for a driver's license or vehicle registration may get a little financial relief for their distress.

A House Appropriations committee voted 7-4 Wednesday to approve a \$5 credit for motorists stuck in line at Motor Vehicle Division offices for more than 30 minutes to obtain items such as driver's licenses and vehicle registrations. If they're still there after an hour, they get \$10 — and \$5 more for each half hour beyond.

The idea of an "inconvenience fee" comes from Rep. Cheryl Chase, R-Kearny. She noted that state auditors have found that waiting times have increased in the last few years, with the average motorist spending more than half an hour before getting to a customer-service window.

Gun laws

State senators voted Wednesday to block emergency regulations that would impair the ability of Arizonans to buy, sell, possess or carry firearms.

Arizona, like many other states, gives the governor various police powers during a declared emergency. Sen. Dean Martin, R-Phoenix, said he fears that a governor might use those powers to have weapons confiscated, similar to an incident after Hurricane Katrina in which New Orleans police took guns from residents.

That policy eventually was quashed by a federal judge.

Supporters said it is during emergencies, when police are busy with other issues, that people need the ability to defend themselves.

A final vote sends the measure to the House.

Flying flags

Arizonans would get the right to fly more flags despite the rules of their planned communities and homeowner associations under the terms of legislation given preliminary approval Wednesday by the Senate.

Many areas have rules about outside displays. Legislators created an exemption four years ago to let homeowners fly the U.S. flag.

A new proposal expands that exemption to permit people to also display the flags of any branch of the military service. And senators added the black and white POW/MIA flag to the list.

But they balked at another proposal to let homeowners fly any religious flag. The measure needs a final roll-call vote before sending it to the House.

Junk food

State lawmakers won't ban junk food in high schools — or provide incentives to encourage voluntary action.

Lawmakers agreed last year to limit what can be sold in elementary, middle and junior high schools. But Rep. Mark Anderson, R-Mesa, conceded Wednesday he does not have the votes to expand that into all grades.

Anderson had offered an alternative: \$50,000 grants to each of the first 50 high schools to voluntarily comply with those same rules. But Anderson said that lacks support.

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