

Prescott leaders enthusiastic about Gov. Ducey's economic prosperity message



Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey, center, walks down Gurley Street with Prescott attorney Alex Vakula, left, after giving an address to the Yavapai Republican Men's Forum at the Hotel St. Michael on Monday, Nov. 13, in Prescott. (Nanci Hutson/Courier)



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Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey, center, walks down Gurley Street with Prescott attorney Alex Vakula, left, after giving an address to the Yavapai Republican Men's Forum at the Hotel St. Michael on Monday, Nov. 13, in Prescott. (Nanci Hutson/Courier)

In back-to-back meetings with a group of Republicans and then a smaller group of about 15 business and civic leaders in downtown Prescott on Monday, Gov. Doug Ducey was clearly stumping for re-election.

His platform: to continue parlaying his 25 years as a business entrepreneur into attracting economic innovation and assuring the state continues to be one known for progress and prosperity.

The governor was clearly proud that Arizona is viewed by major corporations, such as Apple, as an attractive place to do business, noting his administration's drive to keep taxes low, reduce crippling regulations that stymie innovation and protect the state's border from unsavory individuals who unchecked could harm this state's growing reputation as a desirable place to live and work.

Ducey noted his administration came into office three years ago not only "to do some things, but to undo some things," including eliminating unnecessary red tape that hampers economic growth.

Ducey applauded this state's law enforcement and first responders who every day make strides at their own risk to assure Arizona's citizenry are free to pursue their dreams, be it at top-tier universities or in a high-demand field of emerging technology.

He was adamant successes do not occur without overcoming obstacles. The state must allocate



Gov. Doug Ducey, third from right, meets with local business leaders attending a roundtable conversation as part of the Greater Prescott Regional Economic Partnership at the Gurley Street Grill on Monday, Nov. 13, in Prescott. On Ducey's left is Dane Beck, president of the partnership, and Brad Fain of the Fain Signature Group in

Prescott Valley. On Ducey's right is Prescott attorney Alex Vakula. (Nanci Hutson/Courier)

adequate dollars to maintain public safety and maintain an infrastructure that encourages growth.

In his first gathering with the Republican Men's Forum at the Hotel St. Michael, Ducey applauded the efforts of law enforcement and first responders to keep communities safe, promoting efforts to address the opioid epidemic and apprehend those who would try and smuggle drugs into this state. He said he is proud that Arizona was one of the only states in the last election to defeat a move to legalize recreational marijuana.

With Veterans Day just two days behind him, Ducey recognized all the veterans in the room, stating that he wants Arizona to always be known as a welcoming place for this nation's heroes.

Arizona has a lot of bragging rights, including its beauty, economic attractiveness and education strides that are reaping national recognition, Ducey said. Arizona has the lowest unemployment rate since 2008; in 2015 the state saw 140,000 new private sector jobs and in recent time 200,000 new residents. To stay on this road of success, though, requires responsible, forward-thinking leadership, he said.

"We want to call this home today, tomorrow and the day after tomorrow," Ducey said, noting he counts on the grassroots efforts of like-minded individuals to help him and his administration stay the course. "We have a great message ... but we don't take anything for granted.

"We've worked hard for what we have in Arizona," Ducey said. "I'm counting on you in the next year."

Across the street at the Gurley Street Grill, Ducey met with a smaller group of about 15 business and city leaders for a roundtable luncheon focused on how to better leverage the Prescott area for economic prosperity.

Leaders shared their frustration over the impact of the minimum wage hike on small businesses. At least one also highlighted a concern about losing area firearms manufacturers and dealers because the state medical marijuana law prevents cardholders from buying one.

Ducey suggested that businesses sometimes need to take the lead on these voter

propositions so as to defeat laws that they do not want to see on the books; he said often the best way to deal with a bad idea is to come up with a better one. Ducey said he can appreciate the need to give voters their voice, but the reality is once votes are cast, the state lawmakers and governor have to abide by that decision.

Prescott Valley developers Brad and Ron Fain of the Fain Signature Group, said they see a need to leverage more state resources to this region, including new infrastructure and low-interest financing, so as to attract small, to mid-level companies.

“I would love to partner with you,” Ducey said.

A cheerleader for the whole state, Ducey said his position is that he cares less where a company opts to locate “as long as it is in Arizona.”

Still, Ducey said, that does not mean he does not want to see the more suburban and rural areas of the state get their share.

Forty years ago, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University selected Prescott as its satellite campus, and Chancellor Frank Ayers was clear it has an impressive track record. The downside is that so few of their graduates stay here, because there are no engineering, technology or aeronautical jobs here for them, he said. To that end, Embry-Riddle is teaming up with the city to try and change that direction, he noted.

Again, Ducey said he is eager to be a partner in these endeavors.

In closing, Ducey was clear to both audiences that he values Prescott and intends to do his part to market it for all it means to this state, historically, economically and scenically. Not to mention the weather.

“Great things are ahead for Arizona ... People are pulling up in their U-Haul trucks because they say ‘life’s better in Arizona.’”

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