



BILL PROPOSED TO LEGISLATURE TO FUND REOPENING OF PIONEER MUSEUM IN FLAGSTAFF

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Arizona Historical Society



Photo: Pioneer Museum in Flagstaff, Arizona

State Senator Wendy Rogers (R-District 7) has proposed a bill to fund the reopening of the Arizona Historical Society's Pioneer Museum in Flagstaff. If passed in the upcoming session, S.B. 1017 will allocate funds for museum operations and new positions to staff the museum, which has been largely closed to the public since 2020. First opened in 1963, the Pioneer Museum was until its closure a popular site for museumgoers, attracting and exciting locals and visitors to our state. Despite efforts by Historical Society staff from other locations, the Society has been unable to reopen the museum due to staffing and budget limitations.

On October 30, 2024, the Pioneer Museum Community Support Group (PMCSG) submitted letters to key state elected officials to advocate for the reopening of the facility and request funding on behalf of the Arizona Historical Society. If the bill is passed, \$359,700 will be appropriated annually from the state general fund starting in the 2026 fiscal year to the Arizona Historical Society for maintenance and operations of the Flagstaff museum. The bill also allows the Arizona Historical Society to create four new staff positions to facilitate the museum reopening.

The Pioneer Museum tells the stories of Flagstaff and northern Arizona history. Housed in a former Coconino County hospital built in 1908, the museum contains artifacts from the region's rich history and is a must-see destination for locals and visitors alike. The museum is surrounded by beautiful, wooded grounds, which are home to not just the Pioneer Museum but also other buildings and artifacts, including the Doney Cabin (1882), one of the first homesteader cabins in Flagstaff, and a 1929 Baldwin locomotive that had been used in the region for logging.

Local supporters and history enthusiasts in Flagstaff are eager to see the museum reopened. A local history group long connected with the Pioneer Museum, the Northern Arizona Pioneers' Historical Society (NAPHS), supports the passage of S.B. 1017. According to the group's Board of Directors, "The museum's 5-year-long closure has deprived residents and visitors of the opportunity to learn the history of Northern Arizona." According to a statement by the board regarding the bill proposed by Senator Rogers, "NAPHS is proud to support this legislation."

Likewise, Michael Amundson, a history professor who lives in Flagstaff, believes "it is imperative that the Arizona Historical Society

reopens the Pioneer Museum in Flagstaff and permanently staff it with professional museum workers. Museums are no longer the dusty attics of forgotten farm implements and typewriters but inclusive places where people from all parts of a community learn about their histories." Amundson added that the museum has provided countless college students "real-world experience" via internships and other programs.



Staff at the Arizona Historical Society have been working to find a solution to the budget and staffing issues the Society has faced in recent years. As such, Senator Rogers' bill comes at an opportune time. Pioneer Museum was an important Flagstaff community center for decades, and the Arizona Historical Society is looking forward to a bright future at a reopened and reinvigorated Pioneer Museum.

S.B. 1017 will be considered by the Arizona legislature after the new session starts January 13. Supporters of the Pioneer Museum are encouraged to contact their local legislators and show their support for S.B. 1017 to reopen the museum.