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ARIZONA TAX RESEARCH ASSOCIATION

ATRA SUPPORTS HB2372

Eliminates use of state money for nonaccredited courses

HB2372 eliminates the use of General Fund monies on nonaccredited courses and limits their application to courses that students use in a qualified community college or university certification or degree program. The monies may also be used if a student chooses to transfer to a regionally accredited public or private college or university.

For years, the Arizona Tax Research Association (ATRA) has expressed concerns about the propriety of taxpayer subsidy of a multitude of recreational and personal enrichment courses. Courses such as *Single Again*, *Coping with Stress*, and *Creative Grandparenting* are examples of egregious abuses of taxpayer dollars. ATRA's argument lies not in the personal value of the courses for the student but in requiring the state's taxpayers to fund these courses.

Fortunately, at least one Arizona community college does not offer college credits for these types of recreational courses. For several years, Mohave College had been offering college credit for what they call "personal enrichment" or "leisure studies" courses. However, recognizing that such courses are not offered for credit in other states, the district had resolved to discontinue that practice and has transferred recreational dance, gardening, stress management, and similar courses to noncredit status.

Currently, the state does not know how much of that funding is a result of recreational classes because student counts make no such distinctions. Fortunately, Arizona House Representative Laura Knaperek has introduced legislation to eliminate the state taxpayer subsidy for these courses. Regrettably, the legislation, HB2372, is being strongly opposed by college lobbyists.

If Arizona's community colleges want to maintain the confidence of both policymakers and taxpayers they would be wise to raise the standards for courses that taxpayers are subsidizing.