



NEWS RELEASE

Arizona House of Representatives

Representative Walt Blackman (R-7)

1700 West Washington • Phoenix, Arizona • 85007

Friday, September 4, 2026

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Rep. Walt Blackman Seeks Review of Prison Cooling Failures, Officer Safety and Taxpayer Costs

Government Committee Chairman seeks records on August cooling outages and aging correctional infrastructure

STATE CAPITOL, PHOENIX – Arizona State Representative Walt Blackman, Chairman of the House Government Committee, is seeking information from the Arizona Department of Corrections, Rehabilitation and Reentry (ADCRR) following reports of cooling system outages at state prisons during August.

Representative Blackman said the review will examine which systems failed, how long outages lasted, the impact of those outages on correctional officers, employees and inmates, repair costs, and whether continued maintenance of aging equipment remains the best use of taxpayer dollars.

“Arizona’s prisons must remain safe, secure and operational through the summer,” Representative Blackman said. **“Correctional officers should not be working in dangerous temperatures because critical equipment is failing, and taxpayers should not be repeatedly paying for emergency repairs without knowing whether there is a better long-term solution. Before we consider additional spending or legislative action, I want the facts.”**

Representative Blackman intends to request information from ADCRR covering August 1 through August 31, 2026, including:

- Cooling system outages, affected facilities and duration;
- Temperature readings and emergency cooling measures;
- Maintenance requests, work orders and repair costs;
- Heat-related impacts on officers, employees and inmates;
- Any medical incidents or relocations resulting from excessive heat;
- Conditions at the Lewis Prison Complex, including the Bachman, Barchey, and Stiner units; and
- The age and expected service life of existing systems, along with the projected cost of continued repairs compared with replacement or modernization.

Representative Blackman said the information will help determine whether current maintenance practices are adequately protecting employees, prison operations and taxpayers, and whether continued repairs to aging systems remain the most cost-effective approach.

“Our correctional officers perform one of the toughest public-safety jobs in state government, and they deserve facilities where they can safely do their jobs,” Representative Blackman said. **“Conservative government means taking care of the infrastructure taxpayers already own and making sound decisions before small problems become expensive emergencies. If we are spending substantial sums every summer repairing the same aging equipment, we need to know that. If replacement would save money over the long term, we need those numbers too.”**

Representative Blackman will review the information provided by ADCRR before determining whether legislative hearings, additional oversight, budget discussions or policy changes are warranted.

Representative Walt Blackman is a Republican member of the Arizona House of Representatives serving Legislative District 7 and is Chairman of the House Government Committee. Follow him on X at @BlackmanForAZ.

###