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Mary Jo Pitzl [00:00:05] Governor Katie Hobbs kicked off Arizona's legislative session this week with a state of the state address that focused on housing, the border and protections for the state's water supply areas, where she's hopeful for bipartisanship. Republican lawmakers mostly listened in silence once Senator Anthony Kern turned his back on Hobbs, literally.

Ron Hansen [00:00:28] Despite the turbulence and at a time when the state is facing a budget shortfall. This year's speech had moments suggesting potential bipartisan cooperation, and current protest was the only one of its kind this year, which was also an improvement. Welcome to The Gaggle, a politics podcast by The Arizona Republic and azcentral.com. I'm Ron Hansen, I covered national politics for the Republic.

Mary Jo Pitzl [00:00:55] And I'm Mary Jo Pitzl. I cover state politics and policy. Today, we're breaking down the governor's second state of the state address to see if her strategic roadmap to bipartisanship is achievable and what her goals are for 2024. Joining us on the show today is Democratic political strategist Tony Cani and former chief of staff to the Ducey administration, Kirk Adams. So if you had to write a headline for this speech, what would it be?

Kirk Adams [00:01:32] Governor Hobbs shows her experience in year two.

Ron Hansen [00:01:35] What do you mean by that?

Kirk Adams [00:01:37] Look, I think that the first state of the state is very difficult. I think you look at her team today versus the team she had this time last year. There's definitely a heavier dose of experience, both in the chief of staff role and the comms role. And I think it was reflected in her speech. It was a very serious speech. And I think she really staked out the broad middle ground on most issues. So I viewed this speech as far more sophisticated than the one last year. And I think that's borne from experience and getting their sea legs and Tony.

Tony Cani [00:02:13] Mine is Kirk Adams says good things about Governor Hobbs, you know. But seriously, that's along the lines of what I was thinking. I think something along the lines of like, Governor Hobbs does what she campaigned on, right? She campaigned on being the sane, reasonable person who is going to be willing at times to work with the other party, but also stick to her values. And I think that's this speech really showed that that's what her administration is focusing on right now. It's like, where can we find areas we can work together, and where are the areas that I need to stake out and say, hey, let's just not waste our time. This is where I'm not going to be willing to work with you. And I think she did a really good job of doing that. And I thought her presentation was good, too. I think it was like a compelling speech.

Ron Hansen [00:02:51] So let's dive a little more deeply into this, Tony. What did this speech tell you about lessons that she learned in that first year? Kirk is talking about a more sophisticated speech and such. Did she stake out any ground, rhetorically or in policy suggestions that suggest growth, or at least a better understanding of who she is working with at the legislature?

Tony Cani [00:03:13] I feel like she's always had a good idea of the challenges she has with the leaders of the Republican legislature, and the people who have more power over

them, like the Freedom Caucus people, I think. I think that she's always understood that. I think what this speech showed, though, is that she understands that there are areas where she can put pressure on the Republican caucus to get things done that are broadly popular, that are important to the people of Arizona, and that she isn't beating around the bush with that. She just outright saying, here's where we are. She's not giving too much detail. You know, she's not reading a law off up there, but she's being very clear about what her priorities are. The thing that I was thinking about during the speech the most is that people have always underestimated Katie Hobbs. And I think that her approach reflects this, understanding that she's constantly underestimated the underestimated her when she became the leader of the Democrats in the Senate and she had some significant accomplishments, they did not think she was going to be able to win as secretary of State. She did. We heard most of the news coverage coming into the gubernatorial race was how she wasn't running a good campaign. I always felt like she was talking to the right voters. It panned out. She delivered. She was able to get the budget done in a way that I think most people didn't think was going to happen last year, showing that she was willing to compromise on things that, you know, I was unhappy about. Right. Like that's a sign of her doing a good job and she managed it. So I think this speech was her basically being like, are you gonna underestimate me again this year? Or are we going to have to have this fight again?

Ron Hansen [00:04:38] Kirk, you are uniquely suited to talk about this. You've been both the state lawmaker and chief of staff to a governor. You mentioned you raised this issue of more sophisticated speech and such. More specifically, what did you hear that suggested to you that this governor has sort of channeled her message to the right people, either at the legislature or to the public who's hearing it?

Kirk Adams [00:05:00] I kind of consider myself a student of governor state of the state speeches as I attended or listen to every one since 2004. And a Governor's State of the state speech is about more than just what they actually say. And there's a lot of strategy and thought that goes into that for months in advance. Right. The speech is really just the culmination of months and months of work and thinking and strategizing. I think that there were sort of two broad categories that revealed themselves to me as I was watching her speech and taking some notes and sort of thinking about things that we saw in the past. First is I have never heard a Democrat governor, even a statewide Democrat, with the possible exception of Kirsten Cinema, speak so much and so strongly on border security. To me, that was a major takeaway from that speech. I think it identified a level of political sophistication that, for example, we see in former Democrat, United States Senator Kirsten Cinema, now independent, when it comes to border security, border security, I think is actually a unifying issue for Arizonans across all parties. I think that that's reflected in her speech. So I thought that was a key moment for me and the fact that she led out on it, that was the first thing that she talked about. And she really didn't hold back in criticizing the Biden administration's complete and total. A failure on this issue, and I thought that was very, very significant. She still had some red meat for her base. She talked about abortion rights. She talked about her position on SARS. So she still checked those boxes, which you have to do in one of these speeches. Right. But in terms of sort of the non rhetorical part of this, I thought that it was significant that there was no attempt at humor. There weren't even any warm anecdotes about fellow Arizonans. She was establishing herself as the serious person in the room, which is always the best position for any governor to be in vis-a-vis the legislature. And it was a very serious speech in that respect. The demeanor was very serious, very straightforward. Like I said, I don't even think there was an attempt at a joke or levity. And I think that is very likely on purpose. I think that was very likely a strategy choice that they made.

Mary Jo Pitzl [00:07:24] So we've talked about the red meat that is abortion. That's not going to change many people's minds in the legislature, but what are issues that are likely to get bipartisan support and why? You know, you mentioned the border, Kirk. Really? What can the Arizona Legislature do anyway about the border?

Kirk Adams [00:07:42] Yeah. Look, not much. We've proven that.

Speaker 5 [00:07:45] Um.

Kirk Adams [00:07:46] We've tried over and over and over again, but that doesn't mean they won't do something. And I believe that there will be something related to the budget or around policy that they will agree on related to the border, because it's good politics for both parties. It's good politics for the governor. It's good politics for Speaker Toma, who's running for Congress? It's good politics for President Peterson, who wants to run for Congress. So it's all good politics. They'll do something on the border because they have to. There'll be some bipartisanship around the budget. Right. They will eventually, as I always like to say, as the way water finds its own levels, so does the budget. They will eventually get 31 and 16, and it will not be a straight party line vote for the budget. So those are the two areas where I think they will find bipartisanship. I have no hope for much else beyond that, frankly.

Mary Jo Pitzl [00:08:38] What's your assessment, Tony? Do you see other areas besides budget and border?

Tony Cani [00:08:43] I hope that there can be some bipartisan work towards getting prop one, two, three renewed. And the governor did talk about the need to renew that funding source, which Kirk you in the governor fought for when, uh, when you were chief of staff? You know, and I hope that it provides a reset a little bit on that issue because, you know, I was watching from the outside my understanding of what happened when you got it passed was it started with a broad base of talking to a ton of people, talking to the teachers unions, talking to Democrats, talking to educators, superintendents, everybody. But the way that it came out last year from the Republicans was it was a press conference with only Republican leaders. Yeah. There is an opportunity here if they're serious about making this an issue of funding the public education system versus having a bludgeon to use against each other. And so I'm holding out hope that and I think that, you know, McChrystal stood up and cheered when that came up. So I think that there's a little bit there, and I think it'd be a good way to demonstrate a willingness to work together on such an important issue.

Kirk Adams [00:09:46] Tony, you you raise a really great point. And I should have mentioned prop one, two, three as well. But there's also a very practical reason why they need to come together on that. And it's very simply that in order for prop one, two, three to be approved by the voters, it's going to take a governor out there. Raising money for the legislature is not going to be capable. They're all up on the ballot. The is running for Congress. And frankly, from a legislative position, even a legislative leadership position, you don't have the same stick to raise money as you do when you're a governor.

Ron Hansen [00:10:16] Gentlemen, you've both raised prop one, two, three. Kirk, you had a big hand in making that happen. What exactly was prop one, two, three for our listeners?

Kirk Adams [00:10:25] Prop one, two, three was a rejiggering of the state trust fund that funds our school system and allowing more of that interest rate, more of that earnings to go into the school system. It really results in about \$3.5 billion into the school system. If they don't get it on the ballot, they're facing literally a cut to public education measured by billions of dollars.

Ron Hansen [00:10:48] And is because prop one, two, three.

Kirk Adams [00:10:51] Expires, it would expire. Its ten year expiration is up and needs to be renewed. The voters need to do that and look that whole effort. To your earlier point, Tony, was a massive negotiation with all stakeholders, right? LED by the governor. Now, what's interesting about the renewal, prop one, two, three is, in a sense, the governor doesn't really have a say because it doesn't land on her desk. So they're going to have to leverage the budget and other bills in order to give her a seat at the table for the renewal of prop one, two, three. That means that. In a negotiation, they're going to have to prioritize the renewal of prop one, two, three and figure out where it fits Vis-a-vis here. Other priorities, which could be a reason why there weren't a lot of governor specific priorities laid out in her state of the state.

Tony Cani [00:11:42] Along the lines of I don't underestimate Katie Hobbs thing. Like the news came out this week when people have doubted her political operation, that she raised \$2.2 million to her campaign funds issue, meaning that's going to be we're going to know who the donors were. It's going to be public, you know? And she announced that she didn't have to because the way our finance rules.

Kirk Adams [00:11:58] And Tony, I think we're going to find she's probably raised more than that and other buckets as well. So she has the ability to raise money. She will be absolutely necessary if prop one, two, three is to be successful at the ballot yet again without Governor Ducey putting his entire political operation behind the passage of prop one, two, three, those billions of dollars never would have gotten into education. And that's going to require Katie Hobbs doing the same. That's why they'll have a compromise.

Mary Jo Pitzl [00:12:25] The governor indicated that she likes the idea of more money for teachers, but also for the school bus drivers, the paraprofessionals. Does this give her an opportunity to move that discussion to cover a broader range of school personnel that would benefit from pay raises?

Tony Cani [00:12:40] Yeah, I think that that's the opening salvo in this negotiation that she is making where she's saying, okay, good, what you did. Here's what else needs to happen in order to get me to the table. And I think that when when you're talking to the superintendent and you're talking to the people who run these schools, they're going to want that to.

Ron Hansen [00:12:58] Okay, so I'm hearing a lot of cooperation, airs of bipartisanship and strategic messaging and such. But this is the Arizona legislature. I expect some chairs to be thrown, some bottles to be broken. They're going to find something to fight about. Tony, where should we expect the fault lines to be for any of the battles that may come up on either bills that are run and attempted to make their way to the governor's office, or any land mines the governor may step into on initiatives she would like to see pursued.

Tony Cani [00:13:31] Well, we've already seen that the real power behind the Republican legislature is this Freedom Caucus through hostage taking, really not because they have

the most members or anything. And you've already seen Jake Hoffman, the senator who leads that outfit, complaining about last year's budget and saying all these things. And so he's going to be throwing bombs. Of course, he did a press conference during the last state of the state saying they were going to sue the governor, which they didn't do. So whether or not these promises are kept are a thing. But I think that while there are the election, people are saying, let's stay calm for a little while. Let's not push all these like, divisive, you know, initiatives about gay rights and our public schools. And let's, let's just like, have a regular like old session that we I think that the Governor Ducey was able to kind of calm people down in a way that there isn't right now. And so seeing that stuff like pop up, I think, I think there's gonna be a lot of that. But the big one that is unavoidable is going to be abortion. And part of the reason is because the argument that you are going to see, I suspect, from the people who want the initiative when it gets on the ballot to fail, is do we want to put this in the Constitution? That's going to be the argument. Do we want this in the Constitution? So the flip side of that is we're saying, do you want this to be controlled by the legislature forever? And so it becomes a thing where legislators are going to have to answer the question, and there will be bills probably presented. Where do they stand on abortion? And so I think that's going to end up being a big fighting point where I think that most of the pro-life members in the House and the Senate, I don't think they really understand where the public is or they don't care to to come to any sort of a commonsense solution. So I think that's going to be the big fall line.

Ron Hansen [00:15:12] Kirk, the stakes on this in some ways are very different than what it was. For example, during the Great Recession when we had massive budget shortfalls. My sort of guiding principle around this is the smaller the stakes, the bigger the fights are on. These people have the ability to fight over things that are more ideological or, uh, wants rather than what we must do. Given the state of the state at the moment, with its budget and everything else that's on the table. What kind of distractions do you think might creep into the conversation this session?

Kirk Adams [00:15:47] Well, first and foremost, I think elections and I think the change that has to happen so military overseas ballots can be properly accounted for and counted is going to be a flashpoint early on in the session that will bring into it all of the controversies, real or imagined around elections that we've seen for the last several years. So that's flash point number one. Flash point number two was already signaled on Monday, uh, with the governor talking about the need to renew the Arizona Commerce Authority. That very afternoon, Jake Hoffman, leader of the Freedom Caucus, issued a press release calling for the repeal of the Arizona Commerce Authority. The governor positioned herself squarely on the side of business and economic growth. The Freedom Caucus positions himself squarely on the side of.

Tony Cani [00:16:37] I want attention.

Kirk Adams [00:16:40] On the side of something right now. I'll leave it at that. So I thought the fact that she look, there are a lot of things in a state of the state that end up on the cutting room floor. The fact that she included the renewal of the Arizona Commerce Authority in her state of the state signifies to me that that's something she will throw down on with the Freedom Caucus. That's going to be a real flashpoint in a real fight. My prediction is that and the day the governor wins that one. But that's going to be a real fight. And then I will add on abortion, abortion and essays. Those are going to be what I would categorize as election year political rhetoric. Nothing will happen on either of those issues of any significance, because neither side can afford to compromise or let something happen on those two issues.

Tony Cani [00:17:32] I think, especially the IRS. I think it's going to reveal the priorities of the different legislators and elected officials, and then that's going to become an issue in the campaign.

Mary Jo Pitzl [00:17:43] I can't let this go without also bringing up water. The governor had a water policy. Council came up with a lot of recommendations, you know, some bipartisan. She also seemed to signal that that pause on home building in the. Far reaches of the valley needs to come to an end because we need to build homes, and there's a workaround on that. But we've been talking about changes to water policy and things that might protect rural water supplies for years, and they can never get it passed. Gail Griffin, is this the year?

Tony Cani [00:18:15] I hope so. I hope it's not. I don't think it is.

Speaker 5 [00:18:18] I and I think part of it is.

Tony Cani [00:18:21] You know, the messaging that I would focus on a little bit more when it came to the water issue is especially with the pause of building, this is a consumer protection action. This is an action to protect families. The idea is we don't want a developer or a builder to be able to sell you a house that your family is going to invest. It's going to be the biggest investment that you've ever made, and it's going to become worth next to nothing. When you're fighting for water in 30 years or 40 years. That's what this is about in the history of Arizona. A lot of people came out west because of land fraud, because there were people, uh, when our state was first being founded, who had plots of land that they sold to folks who didn't know that there weren't going to be any water. It wasn't developable. Like, that's sort of part of our history. And so that is a fight that they need to keep having where it's like, we need to protect these families out here. And I do think that eventually I don't want to be upon the dam is going to break on that, but like, it just has to be a solution on this.

Kirk Adams [00:19:16] You know, I'm really glad you mentioned this, because I really felt like her section in her speech on water was very revealing. So if you look at governor, state of the States is like version 1.0. Governor Hobbs 1.0. In January of last year, I thought was overly simplistic on the issue of water, almost to the point of being painful, and her approach out of the gate with that state of the state and their initial policy approach was deeply flawed, and I felt like lacked comprehensive understanding of water policy and water politics in the state. Fast forward to this version of Governor Hobbs 2.0. I thought her comments on water were significantly more nuanced and more mature in the sense that she took on in this speech the traditional role of a governor in Arizona, which is I'm going to convene all the stakeholders and we're going to figure out how to do this right. That was the approach she took this time. I do think that this move to regulate rural groundwater is destined for failure yet again. And I think the reason why it's destined for failure is because and this is not only on Governor Hobbs. This is a long standing problem is I don't think water buffaloes and water policy makers have yet fully appreciated the cultural dynamics and the cultural impacts of a policy like that unroll Arizona ranching and farming. It's about far more than just water. It's about a way of life and the threat that the urban core is to their way of life. This is why Gail Griffin has for many, many years stood cross the threshold preventing this type of policy change. But when Gail's not there, they'll be somebody else. This is a big, diverse state geographically. We're highly urbanized, which means we have a lot of voters in our rural counties and cities and towns that care deeply about this issue. And so I just felt like her speech was far more nuanced on water. I

was personally appreciative of that nuance, because that's the only way we ever get to real solutions around water is to be very practical about it. And I didn't think she was that way last year.

Ron Hansen [00:21:32] Water is in some ways the ultimate long term issue for Arizona policy. I want to raise another long term plan that the governor was speaking about. We're in a budget cutting posture at the moment, but the governor's also talking about a vision on higher education and the mission that she would like to see higher ed pursue on that. Tony, what did you think about the governor's plans and just raising that issue at this time?

Tony Cani [00:21:59] I think it is a savvy way to draw a big contrast between what the leaders of the Republican Party are talking about public education right now at public higher education, and what the governor is talking about. So you have Anthony Kern, who, when he's not turning and facing the other way during a speech, Republican Senator Anthony Kern, he dared utter the sentence, Michael Crow has been a disaster, which is boy, is that wrong?

Speaker 5 [00:22:22] Like who? Who thinks that he's one.

Tony Cani [00:22:25] Of the most important figures in state history? Frankly, when it comes to where he's not. And all of this talk from the Turning Point USA Freedom Caucus types about defunding universities because they're not letting the right speakers talk on campus and all this kind of stuff. That stuff is annoying, and I don't think voters care about that. That is stuff that they are saying because it gets likes on the new version of Twitter and on whatever other weird far right wing social media app that they're putting their stuff out on. Voters want their kids to be able to go to college in Arizona. They don't want their kid to have to go back east in order to have a good education, in order to have a career. And so I think that that is a savvy way to start building that contrast, which is one that I expect you're going to start seeing more on the campaign trail.

Kirk Adams [00:23:11] In addition to the politics of that. The policy of this is really important. We do not have enough health care professionals to serve this state, particularly outside of Maricopa County, but even inside our urban cores. It's difficult to get in to see a specialist senior doctors. Not as easy as it should be. There is a crying need, and if there ever was a role for public universities, it would be something like this. So I actually think that issue will be another one where we find some bipartisan support because, I mean, Mary Jo, you covered health care on your beat for years in the past. You understand this issue. It's not something that has been just a Partizan issue. Most of our rural counties are represented by Republican legislators. They care about health care in rural Arizona as much as any Democrat in the urban core. So I think this is an area that we've just identified. They'll have additional bipartisan support. And to your point, I do think that it is popular with voters, and it does stand in contrast with some of the nonsense around higher education that really is diverting us from the real mission, in my opinion.

Ron Hansen [00:24:27] Kirk, the Ducey administration made a big deal out of sort of transforming the Arizona economy away from leisure and hospitality to something that was more tech based. It seems like the governor's rhetoric on engineering is an extension of that. This interest in continuing to shift where the Arizona skills are found and what we have to offer to prospective employers and such. Is there any traction for that? This is also a longstanding priority for President Michael Crow at ASU. Any appetite for taking that on this year, or is this more of a long term plan up the idea?

Kirk Adams [00:25:04] I think that's more of a long term thing. Look, I think that it's also a recognition that Arizona's economy really is at a very special place that we've never been before. She talked about how there are more Arizonans working today than ever before. What we can also say, though, that's higher wages and higher before per capita income is higher than it's ever been before. Our poverty rate is lower than it's ever been before. But that's only half the story. The rest of the story is the economy is just beginning. This growth in the advanced manufacturing and semiconductor space is not just of significance in Arizona or in the United States. We're talking internationally significant opportunity here in the state of Arizona. All the more reason why don't fix what's not broken in terms of the ACA and these policies. Now, what the governor is doing is she is adding a spin. She's a Democrat governor, so she's adding her perspective of. More apprenticeships and union based jobs, and you would expect that and is consistent with the Biden administration's views on the Chips act and things of that nature. So that all makes a lot of sense, right? There is a lot of common ground to be had there. The big play for the future around tech talent, engineering. It's not just tech talent. As we think about Silicon Valley. It's really hard skill engineers, right. And we're never, in my opinion, with the growth that we could be facing, we're never going be able to grow enough of that in Arizona. So we have to continue to attract people to our state, bring these companies and these jobs and the talent with it.

Tony Cani [00:26:40] And if I could say something about that that's working for cities for the years that I did, I know that when these businesses are thinking about moving and investing in Arizona, a primary, there's two issues they care about. They care about education. Are my workers going to be able to have kids getting a good education? But the other one that they care about, that they might not say explicitly, is affordable housing part of the reason why our economy took off in the way that it did when the governor was pushing it. And and when governors are pushing it is because companies were able to move here, because they knew that workers would be able to afford a home that's at risk, getting away from an economy that was only based on building homes. I think it was a big priority for a lot of people for the past decade. Now, we kind of have to build homes in order to get people in. We have to build. We have to find solutions to this very difficult problem of affordable housing, which there is a little bit of bipartisan crossover, but there's also like very powerful figures that don't want some of these solutions to come together. And so I don't think it's going to happen this year, but it is a thing that has to be, I think, that housing should be talked about when it comes to economic development.

Mary Jo Pitzl [00:27:42] I wanted to talk a little bit about the tone that was set by the legislative leaders during the state of the state, as the governor was waiting to come into the House chamber to deliver her remarks, the Senate President and the House speaker gave what sounded like preemptive remarks. They talked about their agenda, including a really blunt, very clear message no budge on anything to essays, the universal voucher program. And then they welcomed her in. But after laying the groundwork, I've never seen or heard anything like that. And I've been at state of the States for many, many years. What does this signal, what was the signal being sent by the GOP leaders? And we've been talking a lot about the hopes for bipartisanship. What does that do?

Tony Cani [00:28:24] I think it sends a signal that Tom is running for Congress, and he needed to get something out there. But, you know, I was when when that was happening, I had this flash. I was like, boy, that's today's Republican Party. Looking at the two guys that were sitting up there, I thought you got Ben Toma, who's a guy who historically has been considered a guy that is conservative, but he was open to ideas. He's someone that you could go and talk to about criminal justice reform. And I was at the ACLU. He was willing to

have a conversation about that. Now he's pretending that he's more. MAGA won't say that the election in 2020 and 2022 were fair, right? So you got a normal guy pretending that he is more MAGA. Then he got Peterson, who was a driving force behind the audit who pushed for as many of these kind of conspiracy driven things that became the dominating news story of the last 2 or 3 years. And the Republican establishment has to pretend like he's a normal business Republican. He's still appointing Anthony Curran to a committee on the Senate. He's still appointing Wendy Rogers to appoint, you know, these very radical people he's giving dramatic roles to. And so to me, I was like, wow, what a fight. What a weird position to be in, because I think that that is what is driving everything is a fear. This is me talking about Republicans, a fear that Republicans have to stand up to the more extreme faction of their party because they haven't figured out what I firmly believe that the core of conservative voters, if you take independents and Republicans, do not back the stuff that the Freedom Caucus wants. I believe it, right. You guys haven't figured out a way to beat that stuff back yet.

Kirk Adams [00:29:54] Yeah, I guess my views a little bit different of that. First off, it was unusual. I'd never had sort of put in years when I was speaker. I would have loved to have protected Governor Brewer.

Mary Jo Pitzl [00:30:02] Um, why didn't I?

Kirk Adams [00:30:04] Well, I think we didn't do it because that was the governor's time. And there's a certain protocol and tradition. Right? They clearly broke with that tradition a little bit. But these times are also very, very different than when Jan Brewer was governor and I was speaker when the polytunnel was governor. And Jim Wires was speaker. Right. I mean, they're very, very different times. And so I took note of that break from tradition. Kind of raises an eyebrow to it, but I think I understand where it's coming from. I think that the Republican caucus feels a very strong need to demonstrate that they are the check on Governor Hobbs. And there's always a natural tension between the executive branch and the legislative branch, even if they're held by both parties. And in this case, where they're held by two different parties. That tension, I think, is going to be on full display. And I think that little break from tradition was a demonstration of that. Right. I attended the Arizona Chamber of Commerce legislative Forecast luncheon on Friday. And you could detect sort of the angst and frustration, particularly from President Peterson, towards the governor's positions on water and essays. And I think, uh, he was pretty exercised at that lunch. And I think that's carried over. I think you're going to see it's an election year. They know that they are fighting for majorities to maintain majorities. And I think you're going to see a lot of rhetorical devices that are deployed just like that one was in this election year. The reality is there'll be a lot of noise, but behind the scenes, they'll figure out how to balance the budget and get these top priorities done.

Mary Jo Pitzl [00:31:49] Yeah, actually, it seems to me more like a continuation of what we saw last year with the whole director nominations. I wanted to maybe end on a lighter note, but one of the things that I heard guests at the state of the state talking about was the carpet in the house.

Kirk Adams [00:32:05] They got get me started.

Mary Jo Pitzl [00:32:07] The work on the house got new carpeting. It's a white and gray blend that somebody said, you know, looks like something that they'd find in a dentist's office. And it replaces turquoise colored carpet that I know Ron didn't like. That was meant to evoke the Colorado River as it ran through the Grand Canyon. Former House Speaker

Rusty Bowers was there yesterday, and he very wryly noted well, of the carpet, you know, if anyone got sick, nobody would notice. So it looks like people, especially those who used to hang out at the house a lot, care about appearances. What are your thoughts about this new rug?

Kirk Adams [00:32:43] It's funny that you mention that, because I was reviewing some photos on your website this morning of the state of the state, and I texted a legislator about how terrible the carpet looked. And, uh, look, I call myself a house list. Being a former speaker on my house list, I love the institution. When I was speaker, he brought back in the portraits of all the old speakers. I love what Speaker Bowers did by bringing in the mural of the Grand Canyon. I think we should respect these institutions for the uniqueness that they are. And bringing in carpet that looks like an airport terminal. It just wasn't my favorite choice. Somebody clearly doesn't agree with me that we someone in the house is not a house just because that carpet is ugly.

Tony Cani [00:33:29] There's a lot of things that politicians should not be involved in, and I think we've learned that interior.

Speaker 5 [00:33:34] Design is one of them. Keep your hands.

Tony Cani [00:33:38] Keep your hands off my abortion here. Also.

Speaker 5 [00:33:41] Can we.

Tony Cani [00:33:42] Maybe hire somebody to just take a look.

Speaker 5 [00:33:44] At this before it goes it? But, you know, what are.

Tony Cani [00:33:46] You going to do? You can't read. You can't spend money to fix it.

Kirk Adams [00:33:49] I'd say tear it out and put the old stuff back.

Speaker 5 [00:33:53] You're going to see you down there with, like.

Tony Cani [00:33:55] A razor blade and some patches of carpet.

Kirk Adams [00:33:57] And rusty.

Speaker 5 [00:33:58] Bowers just rolling that stuff up.

Mary Jo Pitzl [00:34:01] Let us know if that happens. We'll be there.

Ron Hansen [00:34:03] Gentlemen, you cannot say the gaggle did not ask the hard questions. Thank you so much for sharing your time and your insights, both of you. Um, Kirk, if folks want to follow your thoughts and activities on social media, where can they find you these days?

Kirk Adams [00:34:18] I'm at Kirk Adams.

Ron Hansen [00:34:20] Great, Tony.

Tony Cani [00:34:21] Uh, I'm on Twitter at at TCA and I.

Ron Hansen [00:34:25] Very good. Well, thank you both for your time. We appreciate it. That is it for this week gaggle listeners. Do you have questions about today's episode or topics you'd like us to cover on future episodes? Send us a message at (602) 444-0804. Or voice memo to the gaggle at Arizona.republic.com. That's all. One word, all spelled out.

Mary Jo Pitzl [00:35:00] This episode was edited and produced by Amanda Liberto, news direction from Kathy Tula. Mellow music comes from Universal Production Music.

Ron Hansen [00:35:11] Never miss an episode of The Gaggle by subscribing to us wherever you listen. If you learned something new today, be sure to share this episode with a friend. You can also leave us a review and rate us five stars. You can follow the gaggle on social media at ABC podcasts. And I'm at Ronald J. Hansen, and that's an.

Tony Cani [00:35:34] S n.

Mary Jo Pitzl [00:35:35] You can find me at Mary J pixel. That's peachy XL. The gaggle is an Arizona Republic and easy central production. Thanks for listening and we'll see you next week.