

ARIZONA BUSINESS & MONEY

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Arizona's

status grows as distribution center

by J. Craig Anderson and Betty Beard - Jul. 10, 2011 12:00 AM
The Arizona Republic

48 comments

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California law that

forces out-of-state retailers to collect sales taxes on Internet purchases could have the unintended consequence of chasing businesses and jobs away from that state - and into Arizona.

Real-estate brokers say a number of Internet retailers have bought or leased real estate in the Phoenix area for order-fulfillment and distribution centers, and that California's so-called "Amazon tax" likely would accelerate that activity.

Amazon.com, which cut ties with its California advertising affiliates after the new law took effect July 1, announced plans Thursday to open a fourth distribution center in the Phoenix area. That center would bring the company's total warehouse-space usage in the Valley to more than 4 million square feet, roughly equivalent to 17 football fields crammed end zone to end zone with racks of books, DVDs, video games, clothes, toys, appliances and food.

Amazon, the nation's leading online retailer, said that the planned facility would bring hundreds of jobs to the area.

Most would be relatively low-level positions performing unskilled labor. An even higher percentage would be seasonal, available only during the busy holiday shipping season that lasts from October through January.

Still, those jobs might look appealing to local residents who have been unable to find work in months or even years, economic analysts said.

Amazon.com said its total investment in the Phoenix area would be about \$150 million by the time its fourth distribution center opens at 800 N. 75th Ave., expected to sometime in the fall.

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Jobs at Amazon.com

Online retailer Amazon.com is seeking applicants for a variety of full-time and seasonal jobs at the 1.2 million-square-foot fulfillment center the company plans to open in Phoenix.

Full-time positions include picking, packing, shipping and receiving, operations, safety, human resources and technical support. Full-time jobs include medical, dental, vision and life-insurance coverage, paid vacation time and a 401(k) plan, Amazon.com said.

Job candidates can visit amazonapplyonlinephx.com or call 602-926-7109. Management candidates only can apply at amazon.com/careers.

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In general, most e-commerce providers have chosen not to locate their West Coast distribution centers in California, despite the importance of being able to serve that state's massive population of affluent and middle-class consumers.

Many Web-based retailers have settled on a two-pronged strategy with order-fulfillment centers in Phoenix, to serve Southern California, and in Reno, to serve Northern California.

Regardless of whether Arizona gains at California's expense, the new California law is just the latest - and one of the loudest - shots fired in an ongoing nationwide battle over who, if anyone, should collect state sales taxes on Internet purchases.

"It's a negative for the country and for all of us for California to be losing business," said Patrick Feeney Jr., senior vice president of industrial properties at CB Richard Ellis in Phoenix, "but it just happens that some of that business is coming to Arizona."

Warehouses in demand

Chris Camacho, executive vice president of the Greater Phoenix Economic Council, said e-commerce companies already have claimed so much of the area's commercial real estate that the Valley is running low on the larger, more desirable spaces, generally warehouses larger than 200,000 square feet with quick freeway access.

Several additional Fortune 500 companies also have been eyeing the region for distribution and fulfillment centers, he said.

"We are very quickly taking down (filling up) a lot of these facilities that were built on spec in 2007, 2008 or 2009," Camacho said.

"This industry could drive a new development market that has been on ice for the last 24 months."

Nearly all large, online retail operations in the Phoenix area have flocked to the West Valley, including [Amazon.com](#), [Gap.com](#) and [Macys.com](#).

A few, including [Target.com](#), have chosen Tucson's west side for their warehouse facilities.

More distribution-center jobs are in the pipeline, according to local commercial-real-estate brokers.

[Macys.com](#) in the first quarter purchased vacant land to expand its existing, 600,000-square-foot warehouse in Goodyear, and the Home Shopping Network is seeking a short-term lease in order to build its own Phoenix-area facility of between 1 million and 15 million square feet, they said.

Michael Haenel, executive vice president of industrial properties at Cassidy Turley BRE Commercial in Phoenix, said e-commerce providers' decision to locate in the West Valley had less to do with where their products were going and more to do with where they came from.

Nearly all consumer goods shipped to the southwestern U.S. from Asia arrive via ship at either of two ports, Los Angeles or Long Beach, Calif., Haenel said.

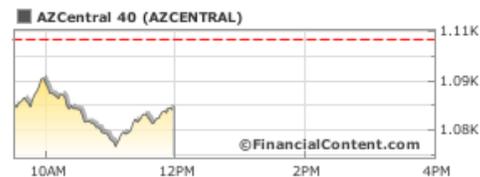
From there, goods are transported by truck to regional distribution centers, where they are stored until a customer orders each product online.

Therefore, it saves both time and fuel costs to place the distribution centers as close as possible to the West Coast, he said.

The West Valley is also close enough to Southern California's major consumer markets that delivery trucks can transport products from the West Valley in a single day and still return within a reasonable time, Haenel added.

"That's what makes Arizona really attractive," he said. "You can still reach anyone in

STOCK QUOTES



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|-----------|----------|-----------------|
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California in one day."

'Affiliate' inquiries

Camacho said that the Phoenix area also has been getting more inquiries over the past two months from e-commerce "affiliates" in California that are interested in relocating to the Phoenix area.

Some states, including California, Illinois and New York, have been looking for ways around a U.S. Supreme Court ruling which held that a state cannot impose sales tax on an Internet-based purchase if the online retailer has no physical presence within that state.

The latest move to impose California sales tax on the Internet focuses on referral agreements between companies such as [Amazon.com](#) and other California businesses, which the online retailer calls affiliates.

An example would be if an affiliate received compensation to refer customers to [Amazon.com](#) via a Web link that said, "Click here to buy the latest books and movies." Another example would be a self-published author in California who sells books on [Amazon.com](#) and ships them to buyers personally.

California lawmakers believe that the existence of agreements under which [Amazon.com](#) pays referral fees to California affiliates should satisfy the court's definition of a physical presence.

Similar laws imposed in New York and Illinois are being challenged in the courts.

Last week, both [Amazon.com](#) and [Overstock.com](#) abruptly canceled all agreements with their affiliates in California, effectively cutting off a vital source of revenue and marketing exposure to those companies, most of which are small businesses.

In other states where similar laws have been adopted, affiliates have been known to relocate to neighboring states with more desirable online taxation policies.

Soon after Illinois passed a similar law taxing Internet sales earlier in the year, two of Overstock .com's largest affiliates moved to other states, said Jonathan Johnson, president of Salt Lake City-based [Overstock.com](#).

The impact of a statewide affiliate migration from California to Arizona would be tremendous, Camacho said.

"There has been discussion of 10,000 affiliates being cut off in California," he said. "We will really know the implications of this over the next three to six months."

Jobs impact unclear

It's not known how many jobs the growth in e-commerce facilities could mean.

Although the affiliates are typically small companies with five to 15 employees, the large fulfillment and distribution centers usually employ a significant number of people, Camacho said.

[Amazon.com](#) alone already plans to employ more than 3,000 Phoenix-area workers after its fourth fulfillment center opens, although it did not specify how many of those would be year-round employees.

Seasonal jobs dominate the e-commerce world, according to Tim Richards, a Phoenix-area logistics consultant whose firm has done work for [Amazon.com](#) and other e-commerce providers.

Richards, who is operations manager at States Logistics Services in Tolleson, said a typical warehouse and distribution center of 1 million square feet could have as few as 100 people working on a given day during the slow shopping season and could scale up to as many as 1,000 workers per day during the peak shopping months of October through January.

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The bulk of the work at an order-fulfillment and distribution center involves shipping and receiving, inventory control, packing items for shipment, and "picking," locating each desired item inside the labyrinthine warehouse and bringing it to the packing area.

Richards said there usually was a supervisor or manager for every 20 to 30 workers, along with some management-level administrative jobs.

The labor-intensive nature of e-commerce distribution centers is a big part of why so many online retailers have chosen Arizona, said Andy Markham, an executive vice president at Cassidy Turley BRE Commercial.

Maintaining a large workforce is a far less expensive proposition in Arizona than it is in California, Markham said.

Just about everything involving employees costs less, including wages, workers' compensation and [employee insurance](#).

"You just don't have the employee costs and issues that you do in California," he said.

The Phoenix area's reputation as a good place for storing and shipping consumer goods predates the Internet age, and most of the area's distribution centers are of the old-fashioned, brick-and-mortar variety - for now, said Anthony Lydon, managing director at commercial-real-estate firm Jones Lang LaSalle in Phoenix.

"The traditional retail is still the lion's share of the marketplace, but the Internet retail is growing fast," Lydon said.

"Generally speaking, these (fulfillment centers) are very high tech," Camacho said after touring one of the Amazon centers in the Phoenix area and seeing its radio-frequency identification system used to direct the shipment of packages throughout the country.

Reach the reporters at craig .anderson@arizonarepublic.com or 624-444-8681 or betty.beard@arizonarepublic.com or 602-444-8667.

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AUblows

Jul-09 @ 7:51 PM

57

8

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AZ gets businesses and jobs, the tax payers of CA gets our illegals, how fitting.

There are 5 replies to this comment. [Expand](#)



exp

Jul-09 @ 8:38 PM

4

52

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Since it's well know that Arizona IS the dumbest state in the nation, the operationa will move here, along with the people who will be working there. Just what we need, more Kalifornia immigrants.

There are 5 replies to this comment. [Expand](#)



BlueEyedDevil

Jul-10 @ 10:28 AM

8

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It's "well know" that you are just another troll.



reborr

Jul-10 @ 3:52 PM

0

6

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reborrJul-10 @ 3:46 PM Delete00

Your lack of education is a perfect example of why Arizona does not need nor want anymore (inappropriate term) hillbillies here, The highest educated hillbilly is still dumber than the least educated immigrant....and that is a "well known" fact (or as you hillbillies would say "well knowed")heheh



Bozgotbannedx6

Jul-10 @ 6:59 PM

2

0

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Can the latinocentric racists stay in California? Arizona doesn't want these racists here...



WinstonWolf

Jul-09 @ 8:49 PM

28

11

[Report abuse](#)

... Ah, now we see. You hail from California. You libs never learn until you earn



RedDragons

Jul-10 @ 6:08 AM

3

10

[Report abuse](#)

If you haven't noticed, without immigrants there really is no Arizona.

sense1



Jul-10 @ 12:09 PM

3 8 [Report abuse](#)

Arizona gets more low wage no skills jobs,,and gets paid no taxes to offset the public cost of supporting those jobs,,,

There are 3 replies to this comment. [Expand](#)



BigBIOck

Jul-10 @ 6:28 PM

4 1 [Report abuse](#)

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What public cost? Income taxes don't count?



sense1

Jul-10 @ 7:42 PM

0 2 [Report abuse](#)

medical care,,welfare,,food stamps,,,



BigBIOck

Jul-10 @ 9:35 PM

0 0 [Report abuse](#)

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They offer medical insurance, and I don't believe someone with a full time job would qualify for welfare or foodstamps.



Tiri

Jul-09 @ 11:06 PM

2 19 [Report abuse](#)

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If only the reporters didn't so completely misunderstand the new California law. It is neither a new tax nor does it require anything Arizona doesn't require also. And it has nothing whatsoever to do with any warehouses or distribution centers coming to Arizona.
Dear authors of this article, dear editor: Don't write about laws you don't understand. Find a lawyer who will write it for you or who will at least explain it to you.

There are 3 replies to this comment. [Expand](#)



IOC

Jul-10 @ 12:24 AM

14 2 [Report abuse](#)

Seems you're the one who's mistaken. The CA law would require Amazon to collect tax from the customer - whereas most state laws require the customer to report their online expenditures at the end of the year. Amazon has stated (IMO rightfully so) that they will not do business in a state that requires them to collect tax from their customers, as they view this is an issue that needs to be resolved at the federal level.

Amazon has flat out said this is why they are not doing business with companies in California. That announcement came within hours of the law in California passing.



RedDragons

Jul-10 @ 6:07 AM

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[Report abuse](#)

Pretty interesting that you're calling out who knows what and even giving recommendations on how a professional journalist should write stories, yet you give no evidence, proof, or accountability to your claims that they are completely wrong. Their story is holding a lot more water than yours. So why don't you talk to an attorney and enlighten us on how this has been so poorly interpreted?



Tiri

Jul-10 @ 6:43 PM

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IOC and RedDragon, the California law approves of an interpretation of federal law (US Supreme Court decisions) concerning the question of what constitutes a physical presence that makes a vendor subject to state tax on all sales into the state. The California tax agency (Cal. State Board of Equalization) could have decided to interpret federal law like that on their own, but their legislature now told them that this is how California interprets it. It is also the interpretation that is more likely, given the existing US Supreme Court case law (do you really want cites??) If Arizona were in the same situation of having affiliate websites located in the State but no other presence by that retailer, it could adopt the same interpretation and without any special law.

The real reason why those retailers choose to avoid taxation in California is simply because California is the bigger market, more customers, therefore more savings when tax can be avoided. Would you like a link to the Cali bill so you can review it?



Ryno

Jul-09 @ 11:36 PM

16

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Right or Left jobs for AZ is always a good thing.



ArizForJesus

Jul-10 @ 8:29 AM

5

13

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This is so wonderful. More plantation minimum wage jobs.

There is 1 reply to this comment. [Expand](#)



kigginsblueblood

Jul-10 @ 1:51 PM

7

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[Report abuse](#)

az

Obama just can't please you libs...



DrSnappy

Jul-09 @ 7:52 PM

41

14

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Just don't tell leftists that taxes drive business decisions.

There are 2 replies to this comment. [Expand](#)



JustKurt

Jul-09 @ 8:06 PM

7

32

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Leftists?!?

So, you are admitting you didn't even read the whole article....just like that?!?

There are 3 replies to this comment. [Expand](#)



choppers1

Jul-09 @ 8:32 PM

27

6

[Report abuse](#)

did YOU read the article??? AZ is a right wing state. CA is a left wing state. what dont you understand dumb (inappropriate term) !?!?



JustKurt

Jul-09 @ 8:40 PM

2

14

[Report abuse](#)

That's not what it said at all, is it?



DrSnappy

Jul-09 @ 8:47 PM

29

5

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It's sad that I would have to explain this to you, but CA is a far-left state, in financial purgatory right now, thanks in large part to its rich and lengthy history of leftist overspending.

<http://www.tinyurl.com/3rvb...>

Now their desperate revenue grab has caused companies like Amazon to drop it's affiliate relationship with some 26,000 CA vendors, putting them on the ropes.

And it is primarily the left which suffers from an abundance of economic ignorance, believing in fantasies such as taxes not affecting business decisions, raising taxes in a weak recovery won't hurt the economy and will increase revenue, and upward sloping labor demand curves, among many other fallacies.

Because you do not understand this, it is also highly unlikely you understand the content of this article, and economics in general.

So yes, leftists.



JustKurt

Jul-09 @ 8:50 PM

3

12

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So, Snapper, you disagree with Patrick Feeney then?

There are 2 replies to this comment. [Expand](#)



DrSnappy

Jul-09 @ 8:53 PM

11

5

[Report abuse](#)

Your reading comprehension and extrapolation skills are stunningly bad.



JustKurt

Jul-09 @ 8:56 PM

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11

[Report abuse](#)

So, that's a no?



rickytickytavy

Jul-09 @ 8:06 PM

11

47

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YEP, MESA'S NEWEST AUTO DEALER KARL'S KOOL KONVERTIBLES (KKK) IS BOOMING. BILLY RAY'S SKINHEAD BIKER SHOP, THRIVING. ARIZONA - HOME OF THE REAL REPUBLICANS.

There are 6 replies to this comment. [Expand](#)



LastRoundup

Jul-09 @ 8:54 PM

25

1

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I didn't think it was possible for any one to be this stupid. Then I noticed it was you ricky. You are this stupid.

There is 1 reply to this comment. [Expand](#)



aqua51

Jul-10 @ 9:44 PM

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[Report abuse](#)

you could add yourself to the list of "stupid" last roundup....



Patito55

Jul-09 @ 8:57 PM

30

1

[Report abuse](#)

rickyticktavy, if you hate the state so much move to your mecca California. There's lot of phuquing idiots there just like you.



dontaxeme

Jul-09 @ 9:25 PM

21

3

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Ricky, you need to have that head injury treated.

 **ATnAZ**
Jul-09 @ 9:48 PM 12  0  [Report abuse](#)

[View Profile](#) Cali still has 10x the amount of (inappropriate term) AZ does dum*@\$

 **Bozgotbannedx6**
Jul-10 @ 7:00 PM 4  0  [Report abuse](#)

[View Profile](#) Cap locks all of your information. Ramble about anything and always blame cacuasians for your problems.

 **choppers1**
Jul-09 @ 8:33 PM 30  6  [Report abuse](#)

sounds like california is the state for you. bye bye..

 **ironprincess**
Jul-09 @ 8:14 PM 18  5  [Report abuse](#)

Don't overlook House Bill 2332, which has been signed into law and chaptered as A.R.S. 42-5169. The new law requires the arizona department of revenue to provide the space and mechanism for individuals to report and submit uncollected sales taxes from internet purchases on az form 140. Russ Wiles, a republic reporter had an article on this a few days ago. The department of revenue told him that they would audit any tax filing that left the use tax line blank. Good luck with that. They'll be auditing about 2 million forms, and I mean that number literally.

There are 2 replies to this comment. [Expand](#)

 **SUNDEVILrounder**
Jul-09 @ 8:19 PM 16  3  [Report abuse](#)

what will they audit? how can they prove I bought something on the internet?..LOL

There are 2 replies to this comment. [Expand](#)

 **ironprincess**
Jul-09 @ 8:31 PM 11  0  [Report abuse](#)

@sundevil: I know. It's madness. The other thing about it is that if you declare your use tax (internet sales tax) to the state, you've just opened yourself to tax evasion charges from the city, unless you simultaneously send in a check to the city (and county) for their commensurate use taxes.

 **RedDragons**
Jul-10 @ 6:13 AM 3  2  [Report abuse](#)

They won't force the consumer to report it, the mechanism

for collection will come at the point of the transaction. This is not unique to California, it's happening in a lot of states. The days of no tax on internet purchases are numbered.



JustKurt

Jul-09 @ 8:54 PM

3 8 [Report abuse](#)

Did the "leftists" at the AZ State Capitol force HB2332 through?!?

There is 1 reply to this comment. [Expand](#)



RedDragons

Jul-10 @ 6:14 AM

3 1 [Report abuse](#)

There isn't enough leftists at the AZ state capital to force anything through. So some rightists must have helped in that.



Mark4005

Jul-09 @ 8:31 PM

22 7 [Report abuse](#)

So CA will still not collect taxes from Amazon, one of the largest on-line retailers, but now many of the "affiliates" will lose Amazon business as well. Dems just don't know when to quit. Hilarious.

There are 2 replies to this comment. [Expand](#)



JustKurt

Jul-09 @ 8:43 PM

6 14 [Report abuse](#)

Arizona "wins" again. From the article -

"Most would be relatively low-level positions performing unskilled labor. An even higher percentage would be seasonal, available only during the busy holiday shipping season that lasts from October through January."

There are 6 replies to this comment. [Expand](#)



JustKurt

Jul-09 @ 9:02 PM

7 10 [Report abuse](#)

Did I say anything about either a union or government job?

Tell us how you would build an local economy on these types of jobs?

While were at it, since AZ is such a business friendly state, which company that has its corporate head quarters in Arizona is your favorite?

By the way, Amazon is still headquartered in Washington

state, right?



mugsy1122

Jul-09 @ 9:20 PM

11

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Hey Kurt,

How are you going to build an economy in any municipality by enacting legislation that forces companies to move to another? Arizona is gaining jobs and tax revenue at California's expense, and personally, I applaud it. Capitalism wins once again; what would be your solution for Amazon in this scenario?



zona70

Jul-09 @ 10:30 PM

16

4

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Tell you what Kurt - how about you head out to Michigan and get one of those "good paying" labor jobs... Oh... right... they all evaporated - because the unions drove the businesses under...



Americandrift

Jul-10 @ 7:53 PM

4

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Kurt, I agree they are not great jobs, but as many of us have found out during the down economy, any revenue into our pockets is good revenue right now. I have to accept some crappy work for money the last few years, but it beats the alternative. Do you think California is happy about losing these distribution center jobs? How about the property tax income, or just the fuel tax income for the trucks going back and forth to either railroad or the post office or UPS? You are so right, they are cruddy jobs, but I would rather see them here than not. Sometimes these jobs, like fast food jobs, are good training for someone getting started who can't do skilled warehouse work.



AUblows

Jul-09 @ 8:53 PM

16

6

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Let me guess Kurt, only good job is a union job or a government job right.



Patito55

Jul-09 @ 8:54 PM

16

3

[Report abuse](#)

just kurt

It is money in the state and money in peoples pockets. Are you one of those miserable people who look for worst in everything? The state needs these type of jobs to help the economy. Go whine somewhere else!



Bob2985

Jul-09 @ 9:58 PM

13

3

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California, Illinois and New York are looking for a way around the SCOTUS ruling. All of these are liberal run states that tax the bejeezus out of everything. Maybe that should tell JustKurt something. California will not be getting any revenue at all out this. Arizona will have the final laugh out of this.

There are 2 replies to this comment. [Expand](#)



RedDragons

Jul-10 @ 6:24 AM

2

3

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Interesting you mention tax burden:

<http://www.jsonline.com/new...>

AZ ranks 22 for income tax bruden. IL ranks 27.

'Taxachusetts' only ranks 37. WA ranks 26.

Looks like the taxes you pay on income would actually be lower in some of those (inappropriate term) liberal run states.



aqua51

Jul-10 @ 9:50 PM

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[Report abuse](#)

Bob2985.....just remember....the most intelligent, well educated people are from states that have strong infrastructure, higher taxes....and most of the Fortune 500 companies are headquartered in "blue" (liberal leaning) states. The populace in these states enjoy more union-benefit jobs, better wages and better quality of life than the "right to work" states i.e. Arizona. Arizona has wonderful winter weather.....but....

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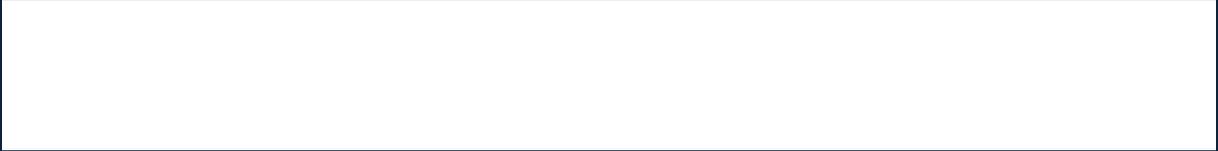
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