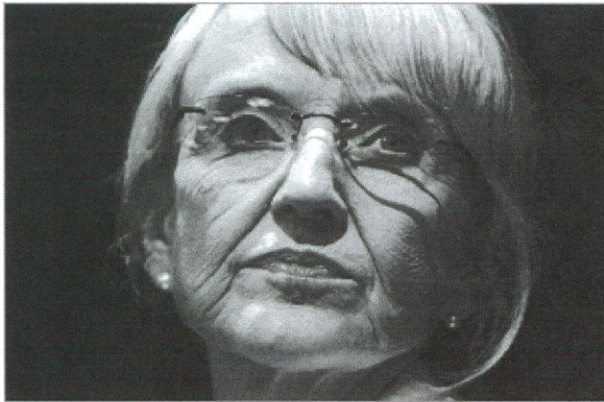


2010 Person of the Year: Gov. Jan Brewer

by Jeremy Duda

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Gov. Jan Brewer started out the year with very few political allies, but the momentum shifted after she signed SB1070 and convinced voters to pass her temporary 1-cent sales tax increase. Now, after standoffs with the federal government over health care and immigration, Brewer carries the most clout of any other Republican heading into the 2011 legislative session. (File Photo)

She may have inherited the state and all its problems in 2009, but in 2010, make no mistake about it — this was Jan Brewer's Arizona.

Brewer's first year was disastrous. She fought with her own party, sued Republican legislative leaders and failed to advance her top agenda item, even after a drawn-out series of special sessions. But in year two, the longtime politico put her personal stamp on the state.

When she signed SB1070, Arizona's far-reaching illegal immigration law, Brewer became the face of a state that hadn't received so much — or such critical — national attention in 20 years.

When she finally got her proposed sales tax ballot initiative through the Legislature after a year of battling her own party, she

showed the state that she not only had the will to stand her ground in the face of relentless opposition, but the ability to overcome it.

The result was a political turnaround of historic proportions.

A reasonable argument could be made that Sen. Russell Pearce should be the Arizona Capitol Times' Person of the Year for spearheading SB1070. But while Pearce commands attention when he talks about illegal immigration, people now listen to Brewer when she talks about anything.

As 2010 began, though, Brewer was desperately in need of allies. Most observers expected her 28-year political career to end in the Republican primary because of her advocacy for a sales tax increase. But by the time she had locked up the GOP nomination, Republican candidates were clamoring for her endorsement. When she toured the state with U.S. Sen. John McCain, many insiders wondered whether McCain, the kingmaker himself, had grasped onto the governor's long coattails.

Through it all, Brewer has been a study in contradiction. A lifelong conservative who began her term as governor with a call for higher taxes. A defender of education funding who proudly boasts of the multibillion-dollar cuts she's made to the budget, including to K-12 and universities. A governor who pushed a tax hike to protect Arizona's "most vulnerable" while trying to cut more than 310,000 people from the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System. A warrior against the federal government who eagerly dished out millions in federal stimulus dollars and sent out waves of press releases to publicize it.

Brewer makes no apologies — for SB1070, for the tax hike, for the transplant cuts, or for anything else. She blames the federal government and her Democratic predecessor, former Gov. Janet Napolitano, for many of the problems she faces, and refuses to budge once she takes a stand.

Many, including Brewer's rivals for the Republican nomination, accused her of simply riding the wave of popular sentiment that followed SB1070. Others, especially Pearce, the bill's sponsor, did all the heavy lifting. She had little involvement with the bill until it landed on her