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Buying into education... gas prices ... water omens I

t may seem surprising that
business leaders are lining
up behind Gov. Janet Na-
politano's call for all-day kin-
dergarten. After all, business
has so many needs, including
state support of venture capi-
tal, effective incentives to di-
versify the economy and,
some would say, tax reform.
But the recent Business Co-
alition Summit showed just
how much executives here
have gotten religion on educa-

The Tuesday Notebook
tion. There's a realization that
our human capital is languish-
ing through underfunded
schools and distracting exper-
iments in school "choice." The
result: Arizona's workforce is
less and less competitive.
More business leaders
agree that moving the poorest
children into full-day kinder-
garten would provide an im-
portant inoculation against

poor performance and drop-
ping out later.
The new militancy on edu-
cation extends beyond this
idea. Greater Phoenix Leader-
ship, one of the coalition's
members, is spearheading an
effort to address education
from preschool through em-
ployment. Serious work is
coming from such institutions
as the Rodel Foundation and
the Center for the Future of
Arizona, led by Lattie Coor

and Sybil Francis....

Just in time for higher gas-
oline prices, a new study
shows that Phoenix residents
spend a hefty share of house-
hold income just getting ,
around. Nearly 22 percent of
our income is spent on trans-
portation. That was the sec-
ond-worst (behind Tampa) of
the cities surveyed by the Ur-

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ban Land Institute. By com-
parison, about 17 percent of
household spending in At-
lanta, Chicago and San Fran-
cisco goes to transportation.
When the study combines
housing and transportation
costs, the region doesn't im-
prove much. About 33 percent
of household income is spent
on housing, in the middle of
the pack of the cities. That
translates into relatively high
"location costs" of more than
54 percent (I am rounding all
numbers) of income to buy a
house here and get around.
Seattle, San Francisco and
Chicago are all slightly lower,
while LA is higher.
The data can be spun in a
number of directions. De-
velopers can say it's a reason
to further disperse employ-
ment centers. Transit advo-
cates can argue for more
transportation options and
"live/work" neighborhoods.
Both probably have some
merit. The data are also fur-
ther evidence against the no-
tion that low wages in Greater
Phoenix are somehow com-
pensated by cheaper
prices....

More reason to be skeptical
when hoosters say "every-
thing's fine" on the water
front: Colorado is facing "a
water crisis of historic pro-
portions." This from the Den-
ver Post, discussing the de-
bate over new water projects
in the state. No new dam or
reservoir has been built in 40
years, even as the state con-
tinues to grow. Before you get
smug, recall that Colorado is
upstream on its namesake
river, which is oversub-
scribed. Colorado's tough de-
cisions will flow downstream.

Hospitality update: Pet-
smart tells Reuters that it will
add 14 "pet hotels" this year
as it expands in the "pet hos-
pitality industry."
At the Phoenix company's
nine hotels, guests can get a
basic room with meals and
walks, or upgrade to a suite
offering a television showing
animal flicks.
That's better than some hu-
man hotels in which I have
stayed.

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