



# NEWS RELEASE

## Arizona House of Representatives

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Wednesday, October 30, 2024  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Arizona Republicans Lead on Rural Water Policy

In 2024, Arizona Republicans made significant strides to address groundwater resources, responding to long-standing concerns and proposing solutions to improve groundwater conditions in urban and rural areas.

Led by myself, Senate Natural Resources Chair Sine Kerr, Senate Vice-Chair T.J. Shope, and House Government Chair Tim Dunn, Arizona Republicans introduced over fifty bills to help secure Arizona's water future and promote economic development through practical, locally driven solutions that balance long-term conservation with Arizona's economy and housing affordability.

Key measures included:

- **Basin Management Areas (SB1221) [Emergency Measure]:** Allowed residents in the Willcox, Hualapai, and Gila Bend groundwater basins to establish local management councils to prevent new industrial and agricultural pumping and to reduce existing industrial and agricultural pumping by 10-15%. *Democrats opposed.*

SB1221 was the culmination of over 112 meetings with stakeholders across the state. For more information and to listen to all the testimony received, watch the joint legislative hearing at: <https://bit.ly/3YGtZl0>.

- **Willcox Irrigation Non-Expansion Area (HB2060) and Water District (HB2022) [Emergency Measures]:** Gave Willcox voters the opportunity to establish an irrigation non-expansion area to prevent new lands from coming into agricultural production and the opportunity to establish a water improvement district to help manage water supplies locally. *Democrats opposed.*
- **Douglas Active Management Area (HB2099 & HB2027) [Emergency Measures]:** Streamlined water regulations for farmers and ensured municipalities like Douglas retained an assured water supply in this new active management area. *Vetoed.*
- **Private Well Owners (HB2063 & HB2013):** Granted well owners the right to withdraw up to 35 gallons per minute and allowed nonprofits to help residents in need by providing funds to deepen wells or secure alternative supplies when wells go dry. *Vetoed.*
- **“Ag to Urban” (SB1172):** Supported shifts from water-intensive agriculture to less water-intensive residential uses, aiding both conservation and housing affordability. *Vetoed.*

- **Urban Conservation (HB2589 & HB2008):** Allowed residential housing developers to reduce future groundwater demand by 15% and established conservation requirements for commercial and industrial groundwater users that currently have no conservation requirements in place. *Democrats opposed.*
- **Stormwater Recharge (HB2020):** Promoted new stormwater infrastructure that increases groundwater recharge in existing and proposed active management areas like Prescott, Douglas, Pinal, and Willcox. *Vetoed.*
- **Nonfunctional Turf (SB1172):** Banned the use of potable water for non-functional turf in urban areas like Phoenix and Scottsdale. *Vetoed.*
- **Wildcat Subdivisions (SB1172):** Consolidated five bills to clarify existing land division laws and prosecute illegal subdivision practices that seek to sidestep assured water supply requirements. *Vetoed.*

These measures represent some of the most comprehensive groundwater policies put forth by Arizona Republicans since the 1980 Groundwater Management Act. The Basin Management Area policy in particular would have empowered local communities to manage their aquifers based on real-time needs rather than statewide mandates, promoting both environmental stewardship and flexibility for rural economies.

Had the emergency measures passed, they would have provided immediate relief for rural communities. Instead, Republicans faced unnecessary opposition from radical environmental groups and Democrats, who withheld bipartisan support and opposed the bills to keep Arizona’s water issues unresolved through the 2024 election.

During 2024, members of the radical Left sought to monitor and regulate residential wells, tax personal groundwater withdrawals, eliminate all groundwater pumping, target individual water users, and centralize control over groundwater, leaving rural communities with less say in local water management.

Democrats’ push for these proposals demonstrates their inability to break from the radical Left and denounce extreme anti-growth positions that devastate rural economies and make life harder for ordinary citizens.

Their refusal to support practical solutions delayed essential progress on critical groundwater legislation, leaving residents without additional solutions until legislators return to the Capitol next year. If Democrats want to pass reasonable groundwater solutions, they must reach across the aisle and work with Republicans.

For years, Arizona Republicans have championed balanced water policies that safeguard Arizona’s groundwater resources for future generations and support economic growth, representing a voice of reason and moderation in the ongoing water debate. Their approach brings common-sense solutions to conserve water, while upholding local control and protecting urban and rural economic prosperity.

By supporting these measures, Arizona can advance toward a secure water future that not only protects our precious water resources, but also respects the needs of all Arizonans and our economy. We have solutions. We need to work together to find solutions for challenged basins.

*Gail Griffin is a Republican member of the Arizona House of Representatives serving Legislative District 19, which includes areas of Greenlee, Graham, Cochise, and eastern Pima and Santa Cruz Counties. Griffin chairs the House Natural Resources, Energy & Water Committee and is co-chair of the Joint Legislative Ad Hoc Study Committee on Water Security.*

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