



NEWS RELEASE

Arizona House of Representatives

Representative Gail Griffin (R-19)

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Governor Hobbs Vetoes Legislation to Increase Local Control Over Groundwater

STATE CAPITOL, PHOENIX – Governor Hobbs on Friday vetoed legislation that would have [increased local control over rural groundwater](#). The bill, [HB2572](#), was sponsored by State Representative Gail Griffin, Chair of the House Committee on Natural Resources, Energy & Water, and was part of a broader effort to make [existing tools more workable for rural Arizona](#).

Stakeholders Agree Active Management Areas Do Not Provide Local Control

Current law allows residents to establish Active Management Areas in rural parts of the state (also known as “subsequent” Active Management Areas), but rural mayors and county supervisors have said the existing Active Management Area framework does not provide enough “local control” over critical groundwater management decisions.

Currently, all future and existing Active Management Areas decisions are made by the Director of Water Resources in Phoenix. The Director of Water Resources is appointed by the governor and serves at the will and pleasure of the governor, meaning she has complete control over all aspects of an Active Management Area, including how conservation measures are implemented.

Although members of the local “Groundwater Users Advisory Council” can comment on the director’s proposed management decisions ([ARS § 45-421](#)), the director is not required to listen to those comments, and the director has final say over all aspects of determining an Active Management Area’s management goals and plans ([ARS § 45-569](#)).

Furthermore, members of the council need not be residents of Arizona or groundwater users in the basin ([ARS § 45-420](#)). This allows outside special interests to influence the director’s decisions without reflecting local needs. Additionally, the governor appoints all members of the council ([ARS § 45-420](#)), meaning local residents have no say in who gets to serve on the council.

HB2572 Would Have Provided Local Control in Rural Active Management Areas

If adopted, HB2572 would have shifted the paradigm for subsequent Active Management Areas by doing the following:

- Allow county supervisors, rather than the governor in Phoenix, to appoint the members of a Groundwater User Advisory Council.
- Allow the council, rather than the governor's Director of Water Resources in Phoenix, to have final say on the management plan and goal for the basin.
- Require council members to be residents of this state and use groundwater in the basin.
- Give county supervisors greater control over rural housing supply issues.

According to Representative Griffin, these changes would have given rural Arizonans a real say in how their local groundwater resources are managed and final decision-making authority over the adoption of local groundwater management plans and goals:

“Governor Hobbs’ veto comes at a time when she has said that she would continue to use executive power to unilaterally establish new Active Management Areas throughout the state—even though she knows that Active Management Areas do not provide local control.

What the governor wants is a management framework that allows her to impose [more regulations](#), more volumetric reductions, and more groundwater withdrawal fees than what is required in urban areas like Phoenix and Tucson.

None of the additional powers she is asking for address the immediate concerns that rural residents face. [Without data](#), rural communities cannot adequately plan for the future, and without solutions to address domestic wells, no new groundwater management framework will do anything to prevent additional wells from going dry.

The Republican majority is working to provide [real solutions](#) and tools for rural Arizonans that [conserve water](#), increase [groundwater recharge](#), address [domestic wells](#), and increase local control without strings attached or [crashing local economies](#). We are listening to rural constituents and proposing solutions that align with their challenges, not pushing pre-conceived packages that seek to achieve ulterior motives.

Our goal is to stop the expansion of groundwater pumping, stabilize the aquifer, and figure out how to put more water into the basin through tools like groundwater recharge, reuse, and recycling, while supporting local economies and increasing local control for rural communities. We hope the governor would join us in supporting real solutions for rural Arizonans.”

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. She Chairs the House Natural Resources, Energy & Water Committee.

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