



NEWS RELEASE

Arizona State Legislature
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1700 West Washington • Phoenix, Arizona • 85007

Friday, February 13, 2026

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

House and Senate Republicans are Unified on Addressing Longstanding Issues at the Arizona State Land Department

16 bills pass House special hearing; HB 2426 adopted onto HB 2150 continuation measure

STATE CAPITOL, PHOENIX – The Arizona House Natural Resources, Energy and Water Committee on Thursday held a special hearing on the Arizona State Land Department and legislation related to its continuation, administration, and siting of utility-scale wind and solar energy projects near residential communities. All 16 bills on the [agenda](#) passed. [HB 2426](#) was adopted as an amendment to [HB 2150](#), the continuation measure for the Department.

Arizona’s State Land Department was created by the Arizona State Legislature with a clear statutory mandate: ensure the highest and best use of Arizona’s 9.2 million acres of state trust land to maximize revenue for the 13 state trust beneficiaries, including K–12 schools.

After years of audits, multiple legislative hearings, and a [scathing recommendation](#) from the Joint Committee of Reference, it’s clear the Department’s problems are longstanding and cultural. The Department still lacks consistent long-term planning. Applications remain pending without final written decisions. Regulatory practices continue without written processes and procedures. The result is lost revenue, mission creep, due process violations, and added strain on Arizona’s housing supply at a time when land scarcity is already driving up costs.

Effective Department administration and land performance directly affect [housing affordability and education funding](#). The Department can address both immediately by selling and leasing more land, thereby making new land available for houses and generating long-term revenue for public education without raising taxes, but recent reports have demonstrated the Department is actively withholding land from public auction while intentionally canceling leases without securing subsequent tenants. Meanwhile, it appears the Hobbs Administration is actively [devaluing land near urban areas](#) to prioritize the development of [utility-scale solar near residential communities](#).

The sunset review and continuation process gives the Legislature leverage to demand measurable improvements and accountability. During the special hearing, members questioned the Governor’s Land Commissioner on basic Department functions and processes. In response to many of those questions, the Commissioner repeatedly had no answer or could not answer, including on core Department operations and on the existence of documents the Auditor General said the Department claimed were “privileged” during a [special audit in 2024](#). After three years of leading a major state agency, the Land Commissioner should be able to explain its basic internal processes and procedures and be knowledgeable of the documents it claimed were privileged.

“The State Land Department is not a constitutional agency,” said House Natural Resources, Energy and Water Committee Chairman Gail Griffin. **“The Legislature created the Department, and the Legislature can set guardrails to ensure the highest and best use of land. For years, the Department has failed to keep land and housing development moving with consistent long-term disposition planning and predictable decisions. That means less trust revenue for classrooms and fewer lots available for homes. This is not complicated. Arizona’s high-tech economy requires new affordable rooftops for workers, and Arizona’s schools depend on trust returns from the sale of available trust parcels. The Department can improve housing supply and education funding today by selling more land and ending the internal practices that keep projects stalled.”**

“The current administration didn’t create these problems, but it certainly inherited them,” said Senate Natural Resources Committee Vice Chairman Tim Dunn. **“Now the burden is on the current commissioner to change the culture and redirect the agency in the right direction. The agency needs oversight, but the Department has an opportunity to make a meaningful difference for the state. A positive change could bring in millions of dollars of additional revenue for the trust. Arizona House and Senate Republicans are unified in our understanding of the issues and of the breadth of changes that are needed. Based on the clear recommendation of the Joint Committee of Reference, I think it’s safe to say that the Department will not be receiving a clean continuation, and that any continuation the Department receives will be contingent on significant improvements codified in law.”**

[HB 2150](#) continues the Department for four years and requires a two-year hearing, quarterly updates, and a five-year disposition plan as required by Arizona Revised Statutes § [37-331.03](#).

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 also serves as Chairman of the House Natural Resources, Energy & Water Committee.

Tim Dunn is a Republican member of the Arizona State Senate serving Legislative District 25, which includes portions of Yuma, Maricopa, and La Paz Counties. He is the Vice Chairman of the Senate Natural Resources Committee. Follow him on X at @TimDunn_AZ.

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