



OPINION COLUMN

Arizona House of Representatives

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Republicans Offered Water Solutions; Hobbs Vetoed Them

By Arizona State Representative Gail Griffin

Arizona has always understood that housing and water are connected. The 1980 Groundwater Management Act required new subdivisions in Active Management Areas to demonstrate a 100-year Assured Water Supply—a consumer protection designed to ensure that families were not sold homes without a reliable water source.

That standard matters. So does its integrity: it must be administered under the law, with sound science, transparent models, equal rules, and basic due process—not converted into an unwritten power to decide where and how Arizona may grow.

Under Governor Hobbs, that balance broke down. After the Arizona Department of Water Resources released its 2023 Phoenix groundwater model, approvals for new groundwater-dependent subdivisions on parts of the metropolitan fringe effectively stopped, even though these housing developments replenish groundwater, and even though developers provided alternative groundwater analyses that showed substantially more water was available in affected areas.

The results of the moratorium were immediate. Homebuilding was restricted while commercial and industrial projects, which are not subject to the 100-year Assured Water Supply requirement and are not required to replenish groundwater, could proceed unabated. In April 2026, a Maricopa County Superior Court struck down the Department’s moratorium, finding it was adopted unlawfully. The Department appealed.

The human consequence is housing scarcity. Arizona families are being asked to wait longer, pay more, and postpone homeownership and family formation. Nationally, the average first-time homebuyer is now 40—a record high.

Republicans did not respond by abandoning the 100-year standard or demanding that Arizona build without water. They proposed the opposite: conserve more water, recharge more water, reuse more water, develop new supplies, improve groundwater data, and remove unnecessary costs and burdens that suppress housing affordability and production. Their bills included nonfunctional turf restrictions, stormwater recharge, effluent reuse, brackish-groundwater recovery, better groundwater assessments, and other solutions.

Again and again, Governor Hobbs vetoed them. Over four years, she vetoed at least 25 Republican bills that would have expanded usable water supplies, restored lawful pathways to an Assured Water Supply, opened land for housing, or reduced the cost of homes for new buyers. The issue is not whether Arizona must protect its water. It must. The issue is whether water policy should be used to create abundance or to manufacture scarcity.

Here are just a few examples of the water and housing solutions Republicans put on Governor Hobbs’ desk:

1. **SB1172 (2024)** – Ag-to-Urban water conservation package. Would have saved water and allowed more homes to be built by allowing farmers and developers to voluntarily convert farmland to lower-water-use housing when farmers choose to take the land out of agricultural production. It even incorporated Governor Hobbs’ requested prohibition on new nonfunctional turf and was repeatedly revised to address the Department of Water Resources’ objections. **VETOED.** (A narrower Ag-to-Urban successor was enacted the following year, with mixed results).
1. **HB2020 (2024)** – long-term storage credits; stormwater infrastructure. Would have created incentives for developers to increase investment in stormwater recharge infrastructure. **VETOED.**
2. **HB2127 (2024)** – Assured Water Supply certificate; effluent. Would have allowed effluent created by a new subdivision to count toward the subdivision’s physical availability of water—turning a renewable wastewater resource into a usable assured supply. **VETOED.**
3. **SB1116 (2025)** – groundwater model; receipt; findings. Required the Arizona Department of Water Resources to acknowledge the existence of alternative groundwater models showing 100-year supplies were physically available and to provide written findings with respect to those models, giving applicants a path to contest incorrect agency modeling. **VETOED.**
4. **HB2271 (2025)** – supply and demand; assessment; groundwater. Would have required more comprehensive groundwater supply assessments so policymakers could make better decisions and understand how much water is available in each basin. Better information would help the state identify available supplies, prioritize augmentation, and plan responsibly for future growth and development. **VETOED.**
5. **HB2055 (2026)** – Brackish Groundwater Recovery Program. Would have established a new Water Infrastructure Finance Authority-administered mechanism to recover, treat, and put brackish groundwater to beneficial use—a direct new-water-supply strategy rather than merely restricting demand. **VETOED.**
6. **HB2985 (2026)** – CAP water; State Trust Land; allocation. Would have created a pathway to put existing Central Arizona Project water held for State Trust Land to use on state lands that could support new housing—connecting renewable surface water with developable land instead of leaving both stranded. **VETOED.**

Taken together, these vetoes and others tell the story. The choice was never between protecting Arizona’s water and building the homes Arizona families need. Republicans offered ways to do both. Some bills conserved water. Others captured or recycled it, developed new supplies, or simply required the state to better understand the water it already has. All were aimed at making responsible growth possible and expanding the supply of homes Arizona families can afford.

Governor Hobbs chose a different course. She restricted housing first, rejected repeated legislative off-ramps, and made families wait while the price of scarcity kept rising. She can disagree with any individual proposal, but she cannot credibly say Republicans offered no solutions.

Arizona can secure its long-term water future and build the homes its families need. The Assured Water Supply program was created to protect Arizona families—not price them out of the communities where they want to live. Its integrity should mean protecting consumers while preserving a lawful path to the American Dream of homeownership. Republicans repeatedly tried to achieve both. Governor Hobbs repeatedly said no.

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.

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