



NEWS RELEASE

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2023 Environmental Report Card for AZ Legislature and Governor Released *Governor Hobbs earns an "A" for her effective Vetoes, stopping the plethora of anti-democracy and anti-environmental bills. Majority of Legislators earn an "F" for those same bills.*

Phoenix, AZ – Today, Sierra Club, joined by Chispa Arizona, released its 2023 Environmental Report Card for the Arizona Legislature and Governor.

The 2023 Legislative Session was the longest session on record, officially spanning 204 days and finally wrapping up on July 31st. The session included significant breaks as there were vacancies, negotiations, and reluctance by some in the majority to adjourn as they wanted to keep an eye on the Governor. Very little of note was accomplished, however, and **Governor Hobbs'** veto stamp got a workout as legislators sent up a slew of bad ideas, some repeatedly.

The attacks on democratic processes this session were again significant and frequent with more than 200 bills introduced seeking to limit early voting, make voting more difficult, and limit the initiative and referendum process, and other efforts to hinder democracy. A measure to require a proportionate number of signatures from each legislative district for initiatives and referenda, [SCR1015](#), was referred and will be on the ballot in 2024. If passed, it would make it extremely difficult to qualify a measure for the ballot.

"We cannot adequately protect our air, water, lands, and wildlife or address the climate crisis, without protecting and strengthening important democratic processes, including facilitating and encouraging voting, and ensuring that the initiative and referendum process is available to help address important issues that the Arizona Legislature ignores," said Sandy Bahr, director for Sierra Club's Grand Canyon (Arizona) Chapter. "Unfortunately, every step of the way, the majority in the Arizona Legislature, sought to make it more difficult to vote and to vote early and has referred a measure to erect a huge hurdle for ballot measures."

2023 brought new attacks on transportation as the majority in the Arizona Legislature sought to put a stop to light rail expansion and really any substantial funding for transit, bicycle and pedestrian safety or anything that did not involve concrete or asphalt. **Senator Jake Hoffman** led the way in introducing anti-transit, anti-bike measures with five bills – [SB1312](#), [SB1313](#), [SB1314](#), [SB1697](#), and [SCR1018](#) specifically targeting multi-modal transportation. All of these bills died in either the Senate or House.

"This legislative session was often a difficult space to be in as a people of color advocating for environmental justice. The mere use of the term environmental justice was shot down and frowned upon," said Chispa

Arizona Advocacy Deputy Director Vania Guevara. “However, our communities were relentless in taking up space at the State Capitol and we were able to secure funding for our Trees for Kids initiative and stop bills that would harm our freedom of mobility, access to public transportation and progress towards complete streets.”

Some positive highlights of the session included important provisions in the budget, [SB1720](#), including \$6 million for the State Parks Heritage Fund, \$7 million for the Upper Verde State Park, \$3.5 million for planning passenger rail service between Phoenix and Tucson, \$300,000 for trees for schools, and \$9 million for Economic Transition Resources for capital projects, economic sustainability developments, renewable energy projects and broadband projects located within twenty miles of the Kayenta Coal Mine.

“While we were not surprised, we were disappointed that again the Arizona Legislature refused to even consider the major environmental issues facing our state; there was no action on climate or climate resiliency, no action on environmental justice, and no real actions to address groundwater pumping or protection of rivers and streams,” said Bahr.

Nearly all of the Republican caucus earned an “F” on the Environmental Report Card this session as they pushed and supported bills to limit transit, consideration of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) issues, and to hinder voting. There were no “A+” grades, but there were 32 senators and representatives who earned an “A.” House members were graded on 18 bills, one referendum, and two memorials (messages). Senators were graded on 23 bills, one referendum, and two memorials (messages). **Governor Katie Hobbs** was graded on 13 bills and earned an “A” on the report card for her significant defensive actions to veto 11 of the 13 bills we considered.

“This year we had the advantage of having a governor that understands the importance of protecting our environment, our public lands and our democracy. It was a breath of fresh air that Governor Katie Hobbs made the Heritage Fund a funding priority and she used her veto power to strike down bills that tried to suppress our vote and limit our access to other democratic processes,” said Guevara.

The Sierra Club is one of the largest and most influential grassroots environmental organizations in the U.S., with more than 3.5 million members and supporters. In addition to protecting every person’s right to get outdoors and access the healing power of nature, the Sierra Club works to promote clean energy, safeguard the health of our communities, protect wildlife, and preserve our remaining wild places through grassroots activism, public education, lobbying, and legal action. The Grand Canyon Chapter of the Sierra Club, representing 16,000 members, has a long history of advocacy at the Arizona Legislature and at the end of each legislative session, the Grand Canyon Chapter develops its report card in order to inform Arizonans about their legislators’ voting records on key environmental, democracy, and justice issues.

Chispa Arizona builds the capacity of Latinx families to influence policy makers and pressure polluters to protect communities’ rights to clean air and water, healthy neighborhoods and a safe climate for generations to come.

The Sierra Club report card is available on the website in English [here](#) and Spanish [here](#).

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