



Arizona Legislative Updates



Proposed Budget Includes Irresponsible Water Funds



Fossil Creek

May 28, 2021

Hi everyone!

This week, the Arizona Legislature introduced and moved forward budget bills, but the bills stalled out before they reached the floor because there are not enough votes to pass them (yay!). On Thursday, both the House and Senate adjourned until June 10th.

The budget bills are filled with bad ideas, most notably a flat tax, but also provisions to fund building border wall, spending \$200 million on projects to import water from out of state (see Mississippi River), and to fund more groundwater pumping outside the active management areas (AMAs). The \$160 million that is part of the Drought Mitigation Fund has limited requirements and limited oversight, so who knows what kind of ridiculous proposals they will fund.

Meanwhile, the Legislature did nothing to address the structural issues that contribute to our unsustainable water system, including allowing unfettered groundwater pumping outside AMAs, failure to recognize the hydrological connections between ground and surface water, and failure to recognize the value of flowing rivers, among other issues. They also did not focus on deep conservation or even question if any of the rampant growth is sustainable. [Here is our memo on the budget bills.](#)

As noted last week, the only good news in the budget is there is \$10 million for the Arizona State Parks Heritage Fund and \$250,000 for the Arizona Trail.

In other good news, [SB1713 \(S/E early ballots; identification; mailing\)](#) was defeated in the House 29-31 with Reps John and Udall joining all 29 Democrats in voting no. Please thank them for voting no. You can find their contact information [here](#). It required additional ID for early voting -- both date of birth and either a driver's license or social security number -- and creates a new reason to toss out early ballots if there's an error in writing the date of birth, driver's license number, or voter registration number. There are also issues with access to the appropriate numbers as there are more 66,000 registered voters without a driver's license. **Thank you to everyone who helped defeat this bill.**

[HB2309 \(violent; disorderly assembly; public order\)](#) is one of the bad anti-democracy measures still out there. This bill will chill actions by protesters and have a disproportionate impact on people of color who are already targeted by law enforcement and will infringe on our First Amendment rights. **Please continue to let legislators know you oppose this.**

Here is an update on the other anti-democracy measures.

- [HB2792 \(early ballots; request required\)](#) prohibits elections officials from providing an early ballot to someone who did not request it and makes it a class 6 felony to do so. This is ridiculous on so many levels, including that we do not currently allow mailing of ballots to people unless they have requested it. **This passed in the Senate Third Read 16-14 and is on the Governor's desk.**
- [SB1106 \(S/E registration; permanent early voting list\)](#) removes the requirement that a county recorder try to contact a voter at the voter's new residence address if an election notice is returned undeliverable. It makes it a felony to try and assist any other person that resides in another state in voting, including forwarding an early ballot addressed to the other person. **This bill awaits action in House Committee of the Whole.**
- [SB1531 \(petition signatures; description; invalidity\)](#) voids the signature of any initiative or referendum petition signer that signs the petition without either hearing or reading the description printed on the petition. We do not require people to read anything about candidates before signing their petitions or voting on anything, why to sign an initiative petition? It also says the circulator has to cross out a signature if they think the person did not read or listen to the description. The result will be more signatures disqualified. **It awaits action in the House Committee of the Whole.**
- [HCR2001 \(initiatives; single subject; title\)](#) refers to the ballot a measure that narrows what can be included in a ballot measure and requires every subject to be in the title. This would make it impossible to place something on the ballot that is comprehensive and would provide another reason to toss out a ballot measure on a technicality. **This awaits action in the Senate Rules Committee.**
- [HCR2016 \(initiatives; supermajority vote requirement\)](#) refers to the ballot a measure to require a 55% approval rather than a simple majority approval for all ballot measures. This is a difficult threshold and will limit opportunities to address important environmental, animal, and social justice issues. **It awaits action in the Senate Rules Committee.**
- [SCR1024 \(initiatives; tax increases; vote requirement\)](#) refers to the ballot a requirement that initiatives and referenda that include taxes have a two-thirds vote from voters. This is an extremely high bar for these ballot measures. **It awaits action in the House Committee of the Whole.**

- [SCR1034 \(voter protection act; court determinations\)](#) refers to the ballot a measure to allow the Legislature to amend, supersede or appropriate or divert funds created by an initiative or referendum measure approved by the voters if the measure is found to contain any illegal or unconstitutional language by the Arizona or US Supreme Court. This would allow the legislature to throw out an entire measure, even if a small part was successfully challenged and would blow a big hole in the Voter Protection Act. **It awaits action in the House Caucuses.**

Updates on other bills:

[HB2248 \(corporation commission; electric generation resources\)](#) is staying on our watch list until the session ends. This bill infringes on the powers of the Arizona Corporation Commission (ACC) and seeks to derail the clean energy rules that are now back on track at the ACC. [Read more about that here](#). **This bill was held in the Senate Rules Committee in early April.**

This week, please email [Commissioner Kennedy](#), [Commissioner Tovar](#), and [Commissioner O'Connor](#) and thank them for advancing a good clean energy package that includes standards for carbon, energy efficiency, and distributed storage, as well as important planning provisions and preferential siting for renewables in coal-impacted communities.

[HB2671 \(now: underground storage tanks; standards; reimbursements\)](#) includes provisions for underground storage tanks to meet federal requirements, which I am pretty sure they should anyway, and it eliminates the sunset of this tax. This program has become a big subsidy for entities such as Circle K that should be using their private insurance to pay for leaky tanks. These dollars should be to help fund actions by the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality, but not pay the bill for these massive corporations. **This passed out of the Senate 17-12-1.**

[You can see bills we are tracking here.](#)

If you don't know who your legislators are, just use this [Find My Legislator link](#) and enter your address to find your district, then go to [Members](#) to see who represents your district. You will find their phone numbers and email addresses there as well.

If you are not receiving these updates directly, you can sign up for them [here](#).

Thank you for taking action!



Sandy Bahr
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Coming Up This Week at the Arizona Legislature

The House and Senate are adjourned until June 10th. Enjoy the break!

