

House Engrossed

rural communities; groundwater; tools

State of Arizona
House of Representatives
Fifty-sixth Legislature
Second Regular Session
2024

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 2051

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

EXPRESSING THE OPINION THAT THIS STATE'S RURAL COMMUNITIES HAVE THE NECESSARY TOOLS TO ADDRESS GROUNDWATER SUPPLIES AND ENSURE FUTURE WATER SECURITY.

(TEXT OF BILL BEGINS ON NEXT PAGE)

1 Whereas, water security is an essential element of ensuring a strong
2 economy and continued growth and, accordingly, is a priority for the State
3 of Arizona; and

4 Whereas, many rural communities in this state provide natural
5 resources that are essential to this state, local economies and the
6 nation, including agriculture, critical minerals and power production; and

7 Whereas, this Legislature has provided numerous tools for rural
8 communities to address groundwater supplies and ensure future water
9 security; and

10 Whereas, in 1945, the state passed legislation authorizing local
11 communities to establish domestic water improvement districts to provide
12 for the shared development of local water resources, including common
13 wells and distribution systems that could allow for water hauling and
14 delivery. To date, no new domestic water improvement districts have been
15 proposed in areas claiming to face challenges with private wells and
16 individual water supplies; and

17 Whereas, in 1986, the state passed legislation authorizing county
18 flood control districts to construct, operate and maintain groundwater
19 recharge facilities. Some counties have completed recharge projects that
20 have benefitted the aquifer in rural parts of the state, which could be
21 duplicated throughout the state; and

22 Whereas, in 2007, the Legislature passed S.B. 1575, which allows for
23 the establishment of adequate water supply requirements in rural counties
24 and requires a 100-year water supply. Yuma and Cochise counties have
25 adopted such requirements; and

26 Whereas, in 2016, the Legislature passed S.B. 1459, which allows
27 counties to establish well deepening and water improvement programs to
28 help with private wells; and

29 Whereas, in 2016, the Legislature passed S.B. 1399, which directed
30 the Department of Water Resources and the State Land Department to work
31 together to develop a plan to establish new water storage facilities in
32 this state and to conduct a study to identify potential underground water
33 storage and groundwater recharge locations on Arizona state trust land.
34 The study led to the identification of 331 potential sites for the
35 development of new underground storage or groundwater recharge facilities
36 on Arizona state trust land; and

37 Whereas, in 2021, the Legislature passed H.B. 2388, which gave rural
38 natural resource conservation districts, public water systems and counties
39 access to Water Infrastructure Finance Authority Water Supply Development
40 Fund monies and expanded the scope of projects that are eligible to
41 receive these monies to include active or passive stormwater recharge
42 structures that increase water supplies; and

1 Whereas, in 2022, the Legislature passed S.B. 1740, which
2 appropriated substantial monies to the Water Supply Development Revolving
3 Fund to increase investment in additional recharge projects and increased
4 the total amount that could be awarded per grant; and

5 Whereas, in 2023, the Legislature passed H.B. 2438, which allowed
6 rural counties to participate in water reuse and recycling programs and
7 regional wastewater recharge projects; and

8 Whereas, less than 13% of Arizona lands are taxable private property
9 and are part of the local and state property tax base that supports rural
10 communities and the state's economy. Keeping these limited private lands
11 in private hands and allowing owners to maximize the economic use of such
12 lands, including the water resources associated with such lands, will
13 benefit rural communities and the state's economy; and

14 Whereas, best management practices for ensuring water security
15 include recharge projects, range management and the ability to reuse
16 water; and

17 Whereas, according to the United States Department of the Interior
18 and Arizona Department of Water Resources, approximately 95% to 98% of the
19 rainfall in Arizona is lost to evaporation and transpiration before it has
20 a chance to recharge into the aquifer; and

21 Whereas, an increase in natural recharge of just a few percentage
22 points of annual rainfall before it is lost to evaporation or use could be
23 enough to help address groundwater supplies in rural Arizona; and

24 Whereas, according to the Water Resources Research Center of the
25 University of Arizona, groundwater recharge projects are a "multi-purpose
26 water management tool"; and

27 Whereas, in 2016, the Hereford Natural Resource Conservation
28 District entered into a voluntary agreement with private landowners and
29 Cochise County to construct a stormwater recharge facility in the Upper
30 San Pedro Groundwater Basin to increase groundwater recharge and reduce
31 stormwater runoff; and

32 Whereas, in 2017, the Arizona Association of Counties issued to the
33 Horseshoe Draw Sediment Control and Stormwater Recharge Project in Cochise
34 County the prestigious "Summit Award" for its multiparty partnership and
35 recognized benefits to the aquifer, including to stormwater runoff,
36 grassland restoration for wildlife and livestock, and increased natural
37 annual recharge to the Upper San Pedro Groundwater Basin; and

38 Whereas, Arizona law recognizes that this state's 42 natural
39 resource conservation districts have special expertise in the fields of
40 land, water, soil and natural resources management and have primary
41 authority to develop comprehensive plans to conserve water, protect water
42 rights and enter into agreements with landowners to develop water
43 projects; and

1 Whereas, constructing intentional recharge facilities can help
2 increase the percentage infiltration into the aquifer and, therefore, help
3 to address additional groundwater supplies in rural Arizona; and

4 Whereas, this state and local communities have done much, and should
5 continue to use the tools they have, to capture and store more stormwater,
6 rainwater and floodwater locally when it falls; and

7 Whereas, Arizona's rural communities are well-equipped to address
8 their groundwater supply and security issues.

9 Therefore

10 Be it resolved by the House of Representatives of the State of Arizona,
11 the Senate concurring:

12 That the Legislature and the local communities in this state have
13 provided and will continue to provide rural communities in this state with
14 an abundance of tools to adequately manage and address their groundwater
15 resources, both now and in the future.