



November 20, 2025

Mr. Larry Bodine
4601 E. Camino Pimeria Alta
Tucson, AZ 85718

Dear Larry,

Thank you so much for your generous support over this past year and more - you've made it possible for me to continue to represent Tucson and Southern Arizona in Phoenix and your strong commitment encourages me every day, even when the odds and politics are tough.

This year has tested all of us. The daily assault at the federal level on our governmental, public and private institutions, laws, rules, norms and our democratic system itself has been, by design, unprecedented, staggering and incredibly demoralizing though there have been many recent, positive signs the tide is turning. This national news also, appropriately, tends to dominate the headlines.

Yet, against this backdrop, the day-to-day work of state government continues and I wanted to tell you about some of what I've been doing at the Capitol.

While I introduced numerous bills on a range of policy topics and served on the Health and Human Services, Rules and Ethics Committees this session, the bulk of my time has been spent on water and energy issues. In my ongoing role as ranking Democrat on the Natural Resources, Energy and Water Committee (NREW), I've been focused on doing what I can to help secure Arizona's water future and, as such, I thought I'd go into a bit of detail in this policy area.

This session, I once again introduced the Rural Groundwater Management Act, comprehensive legislation that would finally provide the necessary tools to regulate and preserve our precious rural groundwater resources, including local control and the ability to put an end to the free-for-all pumping that threatens so much of rural Arizona. This legislation was sponsored in the Senate by my LD-18 seatmate, Priya Sundareshan, and strongly supported by and written in partnership with Governor Katie Hobbs and a bipartisan group of mayors, supervisors and water leaders. While this bill was never even given a hearing by Republican NREW Chair Gail Griffin, despite hundreds of hours of bipartisan negotiation this year and last, we've made significant progress on what this new type of regulatory framework should look like. In the meantime, Governor Hobbs has taken historic action under the existing Groundwater Management Act of 1980 to protect rural basins most highly at risk.

I was also involved in negotiating the "Ag-to-Urban" legislation designed to speed the conversion of water-thirsty farmland in exurban areas to lower water use residential development. While I wasn't ultimately able to support this new law due to significant concerns about the added burden to our already fully subscribed groundwater replenishment system, CAGRD, among other issues, this year's passed version was at least a marked improvement over last year's bill, which we were successfully able to block from becoming law.

The third major water topic of focus this past year has been the Colorado River compact renegotiation. In addition to serving as an alternate on the Arizona Reconsultation Committee (ARC), this past December I traveled with other members of the Arizona delegation, including our lead negotiator, Department of Water

Resources (DWR) director Tom Buschatzke, to the Colorado River Water Users Association (CRWUA) Conference and will do so again next month. In the event Arizona and our lower basin state partners, California and Nevada, and the upper basin states of Colorado, Utah, New Mexico and Wyoming are unable to reach a new agreement, complex federal litigation will likely be required. To this end, I introduced an amendment which was later incorporated into this year's budget to provide \$3 million for the legal defense of Arizona's Colorado River water rights. A new compact will also require legislative approval so making sure the crucial piece of legislation passes with broad bipartisan support will be one of my and our state's very top priorities in 2026.

I also led floor and committee fights this session against a pair of egregious utility bills, one to materially limit their legal liability and the other to grant them broad authority to securitize assets on their books. Both bills, which ultimately passed and were signed into law, were drafted and pursued in a sweeping, disdainful manner to benefit the utilities at the expense of ratepayers and anyone harmed by the utilities' actions. I believe both violate the Arizona Constitution and have requested an opinion from Attorney General Kris Mayes on the securitization bill. I was honored to work closely with the Sierra Club and other environmental stakeholders to fight both of these measures and I'll be introducing repeal legislation for each in 2026.

In notable non-NREW related legislative activity, my Tucson colleague, Representative Betty Villegas, and I were able through our work on the state budget to secure nearly \$1 million in emergency bridge funding for the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), which otherwise would have been zeroed out. This funding preserves twelve full-time staff positions and ensures the SHPO can continue its essential work like reviewing federal projects to protect historic properties, administering the National Register of Historic Places, supporting local preservation efforts and safeguarding our state's archaeological and historical records.

I was also finally able to pass the Arizona bicycling commemorative license plate bill, legislation I inherited from my former colleague, Senator Victoria Steele, and which was included in the year's transportation omnibus bill. It passed the House last year but made it all the way through the process this year.

All told, I introduced 27 bills and numerous committee and floor amendments this session. A bill summary list is included in order to give you a broader sense of what else I've been working on.

Still, as you know, we face significant roadblocks that impact our ability to accomplish more for Arizonans. One of them is the Republicans' intransigence despite a very slim majority on hearing almost any Democratic bill in committee, no matter the topic, no matter the policy proposal. You'll note on the bill summary that none of my bills other than the license plate legislation was heard in committee this session.

Then there's the absolute, red-line refusal of Republicans to address the egregious and well-documented waste, fraud and abuse of their party-line, out-of-control, \$1 billion (or put another way I think better captures the scale, \$1 thousand million) dollars a year private-school ESA voucher program, let alone the fundamental unfairness of draining this massive amount of taxpayer dollars from our public school system in the first place. And there are the Republican tax cuts for the most affluent, the "flat tax," passed under the previous Governor, which drain roughly \$1 billion (\$1 thousand million) dollars annually from our state budget.

Notwithstanding this extraordinarily and unnecessarily challenging fiscal and legislative environment, this year's bipartisan budget, which was the result of intensive, months-long negotiation, eventually produced important wins for our state. While it was certainly far from perfect, our caucus was able to leverage our budget votes to deliver for public school students, protect Medicaid and make big investments to help bring down the cost of child care and make college tuition free for Arizona's students from working families. It was the first budget I was able to support in the past three years.

Budget wins included:

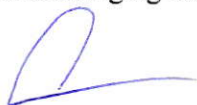
- \$37 million for low-income schools and expanded free school meals for public students
- \$45 million to cut Arizona's child care waiting list in half
- \$17 million to combat homelessness and support housing for veterans
- \$34 million for full-ride scholarships and launched the state's first Community College Promise Program
- Pay raises for firefighters, law enforcement and emergency responders

Another important and particularly meaningful budget victory was on AHCCCS, Arizona's version of Medicaid. Our caucus, powerfully led on this issue by my LD-18 House seatmate, Representative Nancy Gutierrez, fiercely and effectively championed Arizonans living with severe developmental disabilities and their families. We successfully worked with willing Republicans who bucked their leadership to preserve funding for paid parental caregivers earlier this session and lock in these services long-term. The fact this fight was even necessary is a stark case-in-point illustration of the challenge we face with many of our colleagues on the other side of the aisle, whose callous, "starve the beast" approach to budgeting is, above all, focused on shrinking the size of government and ignores an otherwise broad consensus across communities to fund existing programs that help our neighbors and those in economic distress. That said, in a time of so much stark division, this was a bipartisan win achieved through determined advocacy and dialogue.

So that's a brief rundown of some of what's been going on in Phoenix. It's a mixed bag, to be sure. Most of the work I do at the Capitol is behind the scenes, working with colleagues on both sides of the aisle, constituents, staff and stakeholders to build relationships, policy knowledge and, hopefully, figure out the best way to achieve the most positive results. This approach doesn't always lend itself well to social media posts or even much of the regular news coverage which tends to focus on "crazy-bill-of-the-day" stories and any type of partisan conflict. That's why I wanted to send a slightly longer than usual update to help fill you in.

Thank you for supporting our campaign in previous election cycles. I hope you'll consider doing so again. Every dollar helps us continue this important work for a better, more equitable and livable Arizona.

Thank you so much for being on the team! I know we stand together as we work to help address Arizona's most challenging issues. I'm grateful to have you with us.



Christopher Mathis
AZ State Representative, LD-18