

Members of the Arizona State Senate,

03/02/18

Re: House Bill 2498

The Arizona Archaeological Council (AAC), a non-profit organization of more than 200 cultural heritage professionals, is deeply concerned about House Bill 2498. If passed, this bill may result in the destruction of our states' cultural and historic heritage, a heritage shared and valued by the citizens of Arizona, and especially the state's Native American communities. Arizona's heritage sites are finite, non-renewable resources; once destroyed, they can never be replaced. The proper management of our state's cultural heritage also plays a significant role in the economic development of Arizona, through heritage tourism and the Arizona-based private sector cultural heritage firms who assist the state in managing these heritage resources on public lands. The AAC understands the concerns of Arizona ranchers, the mining industry, and the utilities industry, as well as the costs to have heritage resource investigations performed on Arizona State lands. However, the proposed bill represents an uninformed and unnecessary attempt at a solution to address the concerns of industry. It is our position that existing legislation, as well as programmatic agreements and streamlined procedures for implementing existing legislation, are more than adequate to address industrys concerns. Several of these procedures have only recently been implemented, so their benefits have not been fully recognized. Therefore no amendment or new legislation is necessary.

As written the bill also places the investigation and protection of our state's heritage in the hands of non-professionals with minimal training. Professional archaeologists minimally have a bachelor's degree, with supervisors having earned masters and doctoral degrees coupled with years of on-the-job and in-the-field training. An 8 hour training course, as stated in the bill, is woefully inadequate. This provision of the bill will result in the loss of significant archaeological resources, in addition to places of religious and cultural significance to Tribes, places that require Tribal expertise to identify and evaluate.

Members of the AAC understand the intention of the bill, but without input from cultural heritage professionals and Tribal Representatives, it would not accomplish its intended purpose as written. It would in fact, do the opposite and potentially result in the needless destruction of Arizona's heritage. It may also result in the unanticipated discovery of significant heritage resources that, once exposed, would result in delays, increased costs, and public controversy. We therefore urge you to oppose this bill as it is currently written and to work with cultural heritage professionals, the State Historic Preservation Office, and Tribes to find a solution that does not negate 10 years of progress to find a balance between historic preservation and continuing to grow our state's economy.

Respectfully,



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