



NEWS RELEASE

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Arizona Legislature Misses the Forest for the Trees

PHOENIX – The 2004 Legislative Session was characterized by many missed opportunities for conservation in Arizona. While avoiding the important and difficult issues of statewide water planning and conservation and any kind of meaningful action relative to forests, and failing to address in a small way healthier school environments or better tracking and response relative to hazardous materials, the Arizona Legislature did focus a lot of attention on undercutting citizens' constitutional rights relative to the initiative and referendum process.

"Arizona Legislators say they want to protect communities, yet they missed nearly every opportunity to do so," said Sandy Bahr, Conservation Outreach Director for the Sierra Club's Grand Canyon Chapter. "Instead they promoted a tax subsidy bill for logging that will do little if anything to protect communities from fire, and they killed bill after bill that would have ensured safer and healthier conditions in our schools and neighborhoods."

There were at least seven bills this session that would have undermined the initiative and referendum process in some manner. The Legislature added a second referendum to this year's general election ballot — last year they referred a measure to require a brand new funding source for initiatives — that if passed will require an earlier filing date for signatures.

"We hope the voters do what legislators failed to do and that is to defeat these measures which are clearly intended to hamstring citizen initiative efforts," said Ken Langton, State Chair of the Sierra Club.

The Sierra Club recognized five Lawmakers as Session All Stars for getting a perfect score and therefore A-pluses on the Report Card. They include **Representatives Alvarez, Bradley,**

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Jackson, Jr., Lopes, and McCune Davis. “Green Glove” recognition went to both **Representative Tom O’Halleran** for his work on the budget and keeping the Arizona Heritage Fund intact and to **Governor Janet Napolitano** for her budget work and the veto of the ridiculous animal and ecological terrorism bill. **Representative Landrum Taylor** was recognized as a “Good Sport” for her work to defeat the so-called animal and ecological terrorism bill and also to protect the integrity of the legislative process.

“Despite being removed from a key committee and having none of his bills assigned, Representative Tom O’Halleran demonstrated that he could have a huge impact on policy matters, key among them, the Arizona Budget, ” said Bahr. “Joining with fourteen other House Republicans and the twenty Democrats, they passed a budget that kept the Arizona Heritage Fund intact and protected funding for our parks and wildlife.”

Representative John Loreda, who is leaving the legislature after this session due to term limits, was recognized as an Environmental Hall of Famer for his work year after year to promote environmental justice and for his consistent support of environmental protection throughout his eight-year career in the Legislature.

Thirty Senators and House members earned a failing grade on the Environmental Report Card. Senator Jarrett and Representative Biggs got a recommendation of “Back to the Minors” for scoring lower than anyone else on the Report Card.

The Sierra Club was founded in 1892 and is the nation’s oldest grassroots environmental organization with more than 12,000 members in the Grand Canyon (Arizona) Chapter. At the end of each legislative session it develops the report card in order to inform Arizonans about how their legislators are voting on environmental issues. This year's grades are based on 15 House votes, 12 Senate votes, and the Governor was graded on 11 bills on issues ranging from keeping the Arizona Heritage Fund intact in the budget to undermining the initiative and referendum process.

Complete copies of the Environmental Report Card are available at www.arizona.sierraclub.org or can be emailed or mailed. Please call (602) 253-8633 for a copy.

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