**AZ Special District Stakeholders Applaud Sinema-Led *Special District Grant Accessibility Act***

Special districts and the communities they serve across Arizona the state are another step closer toward a level playing field to access federally-sourced funds intended to supplement local governments’ critical infrastructure and essential community programs.

Senator Kyrsten Sinema, I-Ariz., introduced [S. 4673](https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/senate-bill/4673?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%22s4673%22%7D&s=1&r=1), the *Special District Grant Accessibility Act,* which would establish a definition for “special district” in federal law to enhance federal understanding of the nation’s special purpose governments and reduce barriers for special districts’ access to federally-sourced funding opportunities. Senator John Cornyn, R-Texas, co-leads the bill – continuing the bipartisan nature of the effort.

Further, the *Special District Grant Accessibility Act* would direct the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to direct Federal agencies to adopt the statutory definition of “special district” within a year and a half and implement in programming. The objective is to underscore special districts’ status as a unit of local government and set them on a more level playing field to access federally-sourced programs for community infrastructure and essential services.

“Special districts provide important services to Arizona communities – including firefighting, public utilities, and infrastructure. Our bipartisan, bicameral legislation ensures Arizona special districts can more fairly access federal funds as other parts of the government,” said **Sen. Kyrsten Sinema** in a [July 12 press release](https://www.sinema.senate.gov/sinema-introduces-bipartisan-legislation-ensuring-arizona-special-districts-may-access-federal-funds-more-fairly/).

A range of Arizona’s special district stakeholders applauded introduction of the bill including the **Arizona Special Districts Alliance,** Arizona Fire Districts Association,Arizona Fire Chiefs Association, Coconino County, and the Rural Water Association of Arizona.

“The Arizona Special Districts Alliance applauds the bipartisan *Special District Grant Accessibility Act* for its establishment of a federal definition of ‘special district’,” said **Sara Carroll, Arizona Special Districts Alliance Administrator**. “Arizona’s special districts providing critical and essential services such as fire protection, drinking water, healthcare, irrigation, and more, have historically experienced higher barriers to access federally-sourced funding opportunities for local government services. The legislation would begin breaking down these barriers with the definition and setting our local special district governments on a more level playing field as other local units of government. Doing so will further special districts’ investment in essential services that millions of Arizonans rely on across urban, rural, and wildland urban interface communities. The Arizona Special Districts Alliance thanks Senator Sinema for her leadership and championship to fix this public policy issue.”

“Arizona’s fire districts are integral to emergency response all across the state, but have had to fight harder for access to funding opportunities afforded to fellow governments,” said **John Flynn, Arizona Fire Districts Association Executive Director**. “The *Special District Grant Accessibility Act* is the solution to this problem, and will place Arizona’s districts providing a lifeline to millions on a more level playing field with fellow municipal agencies, and helping our districts deliver the best emergency services possible.”

S. 4673 is the third iteration of Sinema and Cornyn’s joint efforts to establish a federal definition for special district in U.S. Code. The prior two legislative efforts were in the form of the *Special Districts Provide Essential Services Act* in the 116th and 117th Congresses (2020-21 and 2022-23, respectively). Then, efforts were geared toward defining special districts in federal law with leverage to access federal pandemic assistance for state and local governments. The current effort would apply broadly across federal programs and would set the cornerstone to resolve related federal issues impacting access to funding resources, including securing the designation as a “standard unit of government” eligible to certify Census population figures.

The bill is introduced as an identical companion to H.R. 7525, which passed out of the U.S. House of Representatives, 352-27, on May 8, 2024. Congressman Pat Fallon, R-Texas, and Congresswoman Brittany Pettersen, D-Colo., are bipartisan leads of the House bill.

Arizona’s special districts are political subdivisions of the state, authorized to be created and provide a specific public service under Title 48 of the Arizona Revised Statutes. More than 300 special districts altogether provide a range of public, locally-governed services such as fire protection, drinking water, irrigation, libraries, hospital, agriculture improvement, wastewater treatment, flood control, transit, and more. Approximately 14,600 Arizonans are employed with special districts across the state.

For more information, contact Sara Carroll, Arizona Special Districts Alliance Administrator & Managing Member, at info.asd.alliance@gmail.com and visit [www.azdistrictsalliance.org](http://www.azdistrictsalliance.org).