



April 6, 2018

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Kimberly Yee
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Katie Hobbs
Senate Minority Leader
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Dear Senators Yarbrough, Yee and Hobbs:

The undersigned organizations, as members of the Coalition for American Heritage (CAH), write to express our strong opposition to House Bill 2498, which is pending before the full Senate. This legislation, if enacted, has the potential to do enormous damage to Arizona's irreplaceable cultural resources.

The CAH is made up of thousands of heritage professionals, scholars, small businesses, non-profit groups, and history-lovers from across the country who work together to support and promote our nation's commitment to historic preservation.

HB 2498, in its current form, is an unnecessary attempt at a solution to address the concerns of some that historic preservation reviews unduly burden development projects. It would accomplish this by allowing non-professionals with potentially inadequate training to conduct archaeological investigations on Arizona state lands. Specifically, the bill would place the investigation and protection of Arizona's heritage in the hands of persons who have undertaken a potentially limited amount of training.

The proper care of archaeological materials requires comprehensive education and training. What would happen, for instance, if during a project review significant heritage resources are discovered and exposed? The individuals described in the legislation would not have the skills necessary to preserve, document, and interpret the site. Damage and controversy would inevitably follow, resulting in delays and increased costs—the exact opposite of what the proponents of the measure intend.

Professional archaeologists have, by contrast, a bachelor's degree, and are mentored and supervised by managers who have earned advanced degrees and who also have extensive field and lab experience. This level of education is necessary in order to preserve and protect our heritage assets. These resources are unique. Once they are damaged or destroyed, either unintentionally or from careless handling by amateurs, a priceless link to our past is lost forever, along with the information it contains. Preserving the stories of our shared past—including the objects and places of religious and cultural significance to Tribes and other traditional communities—requires expertise.

In addition, contrary to the opinions of the bill's supporters, the facts show that historic preservation reviews do not result in significant project delays. For example, during FY2016, only 12 out of 1100 projects in Arizona, or 1%, required a formal memorandum of agreement under federal law for the protection of historic and cultural resources impacted by development activities. What's more, any bottlenecks in project development can be resolved under existing law and regulation, particularly through programmatic agreements and other streamlining procedures.

In conclusion, we strongly urge the rejection of HB 2498. It would not accomplish its intended purpose. It would do the opposite and potentially result in the needless and irreparable destruction of Arizona's finite cultural heritage.

Regards,

American Anthropological Association
American Cultural Resources Association
Society for American Archaeology
Society for Historical Archaeology