

VETO OF H.R. 5118

MESSAGE

FROM

THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

TRANSMITTING

HIS VETO MESSAGE ON H.R. 5118, THE PROPOSED "SOUTHERN
ARIZONA WATER RIGHTS SETTLEMENT ACT OF 1982"



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To the House of Representatives:

I return herewith, without my approval, H.R. 5118, the proposed "Southern Arizona Water Rights Settlement Act of 1982." I take this action with sincere disappointment. I am well aware of the hard work of the Arizona Congressional leaders that went into the development and passage of this legislation. I also understand their desire to resolve the litigation that has hung over the head of the City of Tucson and the many private parties involved for the past seven years.

I strongly believe that the most appropriate means of resolving Indian water rights disputes is through negotiated settlement and legislation if it is needed to implement any such settlement. However, H.R. 5118 is a negotiated settlement with a serious flaw. The United States Government was never a party to the negotiations that led to the development of this proposal. This settlement was negotiated among the Tribe, the City of Tucson, the State of Arizona, the affected commercial interests and other defendants with assistance from the Arizona Congressional delegation. The result of this negotiation was that the United States Government, which was absent from the negotiation table, would bear almost the entire financial burden of the settlement at a potential initial cost of \$112 million and a potential annual cost of approximately \$5 million.

I cannot support this resolution of litigation on behalf of the Papago Tribe by the United States Government. I can only in good conscience approve legislation intended to implement a settlement if the United States has been a major party in the negotiations and if the contribution by the defendants in the litigation involved is significant.

I pledge the full cooperation of my Administration to the States and local governments that are facing the difficult task of equitably resolving Indian water rights suits. I cannot, however, pledge the Federal Treasury as a panacea for this problem.

H.R. 5118 is a multi-million dollar bailout of local public and commercial interests at the expense of Federal taxpayers throughout the nation. It is a prime example of serious misuse of Federal funds. It asks the Federal Government to pay the settlement share of the mining companies and other local water users whose share should more properly be borne by the defendants themselves.

I therefore must return this legislation to you without my approval. I will only approve legislation that implements a true negotiated settlement. Such a settlement is one in which all parties that are making contributions or concessions have agreed to those contributions or concessions at the negotiating table. I look forward to receiving such legislation from the Congress. I am asking the Secretary of the Interior to coordinate participation by my Administration in any such negotiations.

RONALD REAGAN.

THE WHITE HOUSE, June 1, 1982.