

The 2017 Legislative session is over, and you might like to know about what directly affected us. As you are all probably aware by now, Don Tripp was re-elected in November, 2016 but abruptly resigned in January of 2017. The Governor appointed Gail Armstrong in his place. Gail immediately went to bat for us, and here's how.

1) Sponsored HB 418, Inter-Basin Water Right Transfer Requirements. This bill, which passed several committees and made it to the floor of the House of Representatives, would have regulated massive water transfers had it become law. Howard Hutchinson worked with Rep. Armstrong as did Douglas Meiklejohn, our attorney, and they will continue working on a bill to be brought before a new session of the Legislature.

2) Opposed HB 275 Public-Private Partnerships Act. Although a brand new legislator, Rep. Armstrong voted against this act because her constituents opposed it. If you remember, this P3 Act would have greatly benefited the Augustin Plains Ranch, LLC which has been pushing their public-private partnership idea from day one. (See their website <http://sanaugustinwater.com/partnership.html>) It took a great deal of courage for Rep. Armstrong to oppose this bill, and we owe her a debt of gratitude.

A note of interest:

Representative Gail Armstrong will be a speaker at the April annual meeting of the San Augustin Water Coalition. Mark April 29 on your calendar and plan to be at that meeting.

Other matters before the Legislature included a bill sponsored by our Senator Howie Morales. SB 340 would have, had it become law, provided oversight of the federal funds the Interstate Stream Commission (ISC) has been spending on a diversion of the Gila River. Below is an analysis of what the law would do.

“SB340 would require legislatively approved budgets for use of the NM Unit Fund and force the ISC to report the details of its actual and planned uses of the fund. To date, the ISC has spent \$11 million fruitlessly in the absence of real legislative budget oversight. The ISC needs to provide basic information on technical feasibility, water yield and associated water users, project cost and financing before spending more money on a NM Unit project.”

Sadly this measure failed, but we can hope that the ISC got the message: squandering millions of dollars is not acceptable.

Carol Pittman