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Town of Payson
303 N. Beeline Highway
Payson, Arizona 85541

September 8, 2025

Senator Mark Kelly
Hart Senate Office Building, Suite 516
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Ruben Gallego
Hart Senate Office Building, Suite 302
Washington, DC 20510

Congressman David Schweikert
166 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Congressman Elijah Crane
307 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Kelly, Senator Gallego, Congressman Schweikert, and Congressman Crane:

As Mayor of the Town of Payson, I write to express our strong support for the Yavapai-Apache Nation Water Rights Settlement (Settlement) and to urge you to reintroduce legislation to ratify and confirm it at your earliest opportunity.

The Settlement represents a balanced compromise of the Yavapai-Apache Nation's water rights, resolving years of litigation and uncertainty for state-based water rights holders while providing critical funding for water-related infrastructure. This agreement will enhance long-term water security for Arizona, the Nation, and communities across the Verde River Watershed.

The Town of Payson understands the transformative benefits of renewable water resources and depends upon our partnership with the Salt River Project (SRP) and the C.C. Cragin Reservoir as a resilient water supply for the Town. SRP operates pumping facilities that transport surface water from the reservoir to the headwaters of the East Verde River. Payson accesses its 27.2% share of this surface water at that point and conveys it through a 13-mile pipeline to the Town's state-of-the-art microfiltration treatment plant, capable of processing 4.3 million gallons per day and generating 178 kilowatts of hydroelectric power. After treatment, the potable water is distributed throughout the Town of Payson water service area. Any excess water is recharged

SEP 24 2025 * 82

into the aquifer through the Town's Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR) wells, supporting long-term water storage.

The key takeaway is that this reliable surface water source significantly reduces our dependence on groundwater, enhances drought resilience through aquifer replenishment, and provides economic and quality of life benefits to our community. We believe the Yavapai-Apache Nation could realize similar benefits through the proposed Settlement—gaining greater water security, infrastructure investment, and opportunities for regional collaboration to advance sustainable water management across the Verde River Watershed.

We commend the Nation and the settling parties for their decades-long commitment to achieving a comprehensive settlement of the Nation's water rights and those of the United States on its behalf.

On behalf of the Town of Payson, we thank you for your leadership on water issues. We appreciate the opportunity to express our support for the Yavapai-Apache Nation Water Rights Settlement and hope you will advance it in Congress, consistent with all applicable legal requirements.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Stephen Otto', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Stephen Otto
Mayor, Town of Payson

cc: Darren Coldwell, Town of Payson Manager
Tanner Henry, Town of Payson Water Department Director
Tracie Bailey, Town of Payson Clerk