STATE OF ARIZONA

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June 4, 2007

The Honorable Jim Weiers
Speaker of the House
Arizona House of Representatives
1700 West Washington Street
Phoenix, Arizona 85007

Re: House Bill 2780: noncontiguous county island fire districts

Dear Speaker Weiers:

Today, I allowed House Bill 2780, the county fire island bill, to become law without my signature.

This bill is not the best solution to the county fire island problem in Maricopa County, but it is an improvement over the status quo. Unfortunately, bickering between Maricopa County, the City of Gilbert and Rural Metro has left an unacceptable number of county island residents without fire and emergency coverage. Although I am sympathetic to the complaints of several cities that this bill imposes a one-size-fits-all approach to solving the county fire island problem in Gilbert and may ultimately create problems elsewhere, these cities have not agreed to guarantee primary fire and emergency coverage to county island residents until a better bill is enacted. Faced with the prospect of an indefinite period in which county island residents would risk having no fire protection whatsoever, I have concluded that on balance, it is better to allow this bill to become law. I have received assurances, however, from the leading legislative supporters of House Bill 2780 that they will work more closely with the cities to address the cities' concerns and improve this legislation next session.

I also am encouraged by representations from the Chairman of the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors that Maricopa County intends to pass a resolution this week making clear that until the effective date of House Bill 2780, the county will pay the costs incurred by primary and secondary responders to a fire on a county island, and indemnify a responding city against claims arising out of the city's response to the fire. Such assurances were material to my decision to allow this bill to become law, and they offer

important interim protection to both the cities that neighbor county islands and county island residents (who must always bear ultimate responsibility for the cost of their fire and emergency services).

Yours very truly,

Janet Napolitano
Governor

JN:TAN/jm

cc: The Honorable Timothy Bee
The Honorable John McComish
The Honorable Bob Robson