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**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
DISTRICT OF ARIZONA**

Mi Familia Vota; et al.,  
Plaintiffs,

v.

Katie Hobbs, in her official capacity as  
Arizona Secretary of State; et al.,  
Defendants.

Case No. CV-21-01423-PHX-DWL

**PLAINTIFFS' OPPOSITION TO  
MOTION TO STAY (ECF NO. 58)**

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1 This lawsuit challenges two laws enacted by the Arizona legislature in the wake of  
2 the 2020 election that are designed to make it harder for Arizonans to vote. The first  
3 (SB 1485) restricts Arizona’s permanent early voting list (“PEVL”) by purging certain  
4 voters—who will disproportionately be voters of color—from the PEVL. The second  
5 (SB 1003) irrationally requires unsigned mail-in ballots to be cured by election night, while  
6 allowing ballots that contain mismatched signatures an additional five-day cure period.

7 Plaintiffs bring three claims: (1) that SB 1485 and SB 1003, individually *and*  
8 *collectively*, are an undue burden on Arizonans’ right to vote as guaranteed by the First and  
9 Fourteenth Amendments and the Supreme Court’s *Anderson/Burdick* framework; (2) that  
10 SB 1485 and SB 1003 violate the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments because the  
11 legislature enacted them with racially discriminatory intent; and (3) that SB 1485 and  
12 SB 1003 violate Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act for the same reason. On October 4,  
13 2021, this Court granted the Plaintiff-Intervenors’ motion to intervene and their  
14 subsequently-filed complaint in intervention makes similar claims.<sup>1</sup>

15 The Attorney General—but not any of the Defendants who actually administer  
16 elections in Arizona—has moved to stay briefing on Plaintiffs’ *Anderson/Burdick* claims  
17 only and solely as to SB 1003. As explained below, this request should be denied. Most  
18 importantly, fragmenting the claims in this case will not serve judicial economy. In  
19 addition, a stay will prejudice Plaintiffs, while Defendants will suffer no prejudice if the  
20 motion is denied.

## 21 **BACKGROUND**

22 Arizona has a long history of discrimination and voter suppression. (*See Compl.*  
23 ¶¶ 97–126, ECF No. 1.) In 2021, shortly after an election in which voter turnout by voters  
24 of color surged and the presidential candidate preferred by Arizonan voters of color won,  
25 and amid baseless accusations of improprieties in that election, the legislature passed new

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26  
27 <sup>1</sup> In accordance with this Court’s order granting the motion to intervene, which designated  
28 the original Plaintiffs as responsible for coordinating the prosecution of this case, Plaintiffs  
have conferred with Plaintiff-Intervenors, who join in this motion. The term “Plaintiffs” as  
used throughout this brief accordingly refers to both sets of plaintiffs, collectively.

1 laws intended to make it harder for Arizonans, and especially Arizonans of color, to vote.  
2 This lawsuit challenges two such laws. The first, SB 1485, will purge from Arizona’s  
3 permanent early voting list any voter who does not cast a mail-in ballot in two consecutive  
4 election cycles. (*Id.* ¶¶ 69–84.) The second, SB 1003, requires voters who submit mail-in  
5 ballots without a signature to cure the ballots by 7:00 p.m. on election day, irrationally  
6 treating unsigned ballots differently than ballots alleged to have mismatched signatures or  
7 provisional ballots cast by in-person voters lacking an acceptable form of identification,  
8 both of which are permitted a five-day cure period. (*Id.* ¶¶ 85–96; Compl. In Intervention  
9 ¶ 52, ECF No. 55.)

10 At issue in the Attorney General’s motion to stay are Plaintiffs’ claims that the laws  
11 individually and cumulatively impose an undue burden on Arizonans’ right to vote, as  
12 guaranteed by the First and Fourteenth Amendments. (*Id.* ¶¶ 127–35; *see also* Compl. In  
13 Intervention ¶¶ 122–31) (the “*Anderson/Burdick* Claims”). Plaintiffs also bring claims  
14 alleging that the laws were enacted by a legislature which knew and intended that the laws  
15 would disproportionately impact voters of color, in violation of the Fourteenth  
16 Amendment, the Fifteenth Amendment, and the Voting Rights Act (Compl. ¶¶ 136–45;  
17 Compl. In Intervention ¶¶ 132–41) (the “*Intentional Discrimination* Claims”).

18 The Attorney General’s motion relates only to the *Anderson/Burdick* Claims and  
19 only in so far as those claims apply to SB 1003. Nearly two years before the legislature  
20 passed SB 1003, Defendant Katie Hobbs, Secretary of State, sought to issue guidance that  
21 missing signatures could be cured on the same timeline as mismatched signatures—until  
22 5:00 p.m. on the fifth business day after the election. (Compl. ¶ 85, n.21.) After the  
23 Attorney General blocked this guidance over the objection of Secretary Hobbs and several  
24 county recorders, the Secretary issued guidance that missing signatures would have to be  
25 cured by 7:00 p.m. on election day. (*Id.*; Compl. In Intervention ¶ 80.)

26 The Arizona Democratic Party, DSCC, and DNC subsequently challenged the 2019  
27 guidance. *Arizona Democratic Party v. Hobbs*, 485 F. Supp. 3d 1073, 1082 (D. Ariz. 2020)  
28 (“*Hobbs*”). In September 2020, the district court enjoined that rule, finding that it

1 unconstitutionally burdened Arizonans’ right to vote, and directed Arizona to permit curing  
2 of unsigned ballots until 5:00 p.m. on the fifth business day after the election. *Id.* at 1095–  
3 96. By the time the case was resolved, it was late in the 2020 election cycle. The Attorney  
4 General and Republican Party intervenors appealed and, in September 2020, the Ninth  
5 Circuit granted their emergency motion for a stay of the injunction pending that appeal.  
6 *Arizona Democratic Party v. Hobbs*, 976 F.3d 1081, 1087 (9th Cir. 2020). A merits panel  
7 heard oral argument on July 7, 2021, but has not yet ruled. As a result, the election day  
8 deadline for curing missing signature ballots remains operative and inconsistent with the  
9 deadline for either mismatched signature ballots or ballots of in-person voters who fail to  
10 bring identification with them on election day, both of which are curable for five days after  
11 the election.

12 In the meantime, the Arizona legislature enacted SB 1003, providing as a matter of  
13 statute (rather than Secretary Hobbs’s guidance) a cure deadline for missing signatures only  
14 of 7:00 p.m. on election day.

15 Because of the pendency of the *Hobbs* appeal in the Ninth Circuit, the Attorney  
16 General requests that the Court stay briefing of Plaintiffs’ *Anderson/Burdick* Claims—but  
17 only with respect to SB 1003. (Attorney General’s Mot. Stay Resolution of Pls’ *Anderson-*  
18 *Burdick* Non-Signature Curing Claim, ECF No. 58 (“AG Br.”).) Plaintiffs’  
19 *Anderson/Burdick* Claims with respect to SB 1485 would not be stayed, nor would  
20 Plaintiffs’ Intentional Discrimination Claims. The Attorney General proposes that this  
21 partial stay last 60 days, “to be revisited” if the Ninth Circuit has not issued its decision in  
22 *Hobbs* by then. (*Id.*)

### 23 LEGAL STANDARD

24 A district court has discretionary power to stay proceedings in its own court. *Landis*  
25 *v. North American Co.*, 299 U.S. 248, 254 (1936); *Lockyer v. Mirant Corp.*, 398 F.3d 1098,  
26 1109 (9th Cir. 2005). In deciding whether to stay a pending proceeding, a court should  
27 weigh “the competing interests which will be affected,” including “the possible damage  
28 which may result from the granting of a stay, the hardship or inequity which a party may

1 suffer in being required to go forward, and the orderly course of justice measured in terms  
2 of the simplifying or complicating of issues, proof, and questions of law which could be  
3 expected to result from a stay.” *Lockyer*, 398 F.3d at 1110 (quoting *CMAX, Inc. v. Hall*,  
4 300 F.2d 265 (9th Cir. 1962)).

## 5 ARGUMENT

### 6 **I. Judicial Economy Is Not Served By A Stay.**

#### 7 **A. *Hobbs* Will Not Resolve Plaintiffs’ *Anderson/Burdick* Claims As To** 8 **SB 1003.**

9 Contrary to the Attorney General’s contention, *Hobbs* does not control the outcome  
10 of Plaintiffs’ *Anderson/Burdick* Claims. Not only is the claim here broader than the claim  
11 at issue in *Hobbs*, but Plaintiffs’ claims in this lawsuit are based on the electoral system as  
12 it exists *today* in the aftermath of the 2020 election and resulting legislation.

13 In *Hobbs*, the plaintiffs alleged only that the guidance analogous to SB 1003 is an  
14 undue burden in violation of the First and Fourteenth Amendments. *Hobbs*, 485 F. Supp.  
15 3d at 1082. Here, Plaintiffs challenge *both* SB 1485 and SB 1003, arguing that they violate  
16 the First and Fourteenth Amendments individually *and* cumulatively. (See Compl. ¶ 132  
17 (“[SB 1485] and [SB 1003], individually and collectively, severely burden Arizona’s voters  
18 through each individual restriction and through the cumulative effect of the suppressive  
19 measures which impose barriers to voting.”).) The claims are not identical. Further,  
20 Plaintiffs’ claims will be based on a record that reflects what actually happened in the 2020  
21 election—an election with historic voter turnout in which the cure-period deadline may  
22 have had a much greater impact than in the past. In addition, this case is about (at least in  
23 part) what actually motivated the Arizona legislature in 2021 to enact SB 1003, which was  
24 not at issue in *Hobbs*. Thus, a decision in *Hobbs* may be relevant to Plaintiffs’  
25 *Anderson/Burdick* Claims, but it will not be dispositive.

26 In addition, when evaluating the constitutionality of election laws, the election  
27 scheme must be considered as a whole. See *Montana Green Party v. Jacobsen*, No. 20-  
28 35340, 2021 WL 5173989, at \*5 (9th Cir. Nov. 8, 2021) (“In determining the

1 constitutionality of election laws, we analyze a ballot access scheme as a whole.” (citing  
2 *Ariz. Libertarian Party v. Reagan*, 798 F.3d 723, 730 (9th Cir. 2015)); *see also* *Clingman*  
3 *v. Beaver*, 544 U.S. 581, 607–08 (2005) (O’Connor, J., concurring) (“A panoply of  
4 regulations, each apparently defensible when considered alone, may nevertheless have the  
5 combined effect of severely restricting participation and competition.”). Thus, this Court  
6 must consider not only the cumulative effects of SB 1485 and SB 1003. It must also  
7 consider the effects of SB 1003—legislation with permanence, not guidance—in Arizona  
8 as the electoral system exists now, not as it existed at the time of trial in *Hobbs*.

9 For all of these reasons, the Ninth Circuit’s forthcoming decision in *Hobbs*, while  
10 relevant, will not resolve Plaintiffs’ *Anderson/Burdick* Claims as a matter of law.  
11 Speculation that after the Ninth Circuit’s decision in *Hobbs* only “a simple paragraph or  
12 two” of analysis will be required to dispose of Plaintiffs’ claims in this case is an  
13 insufficient basis for a stay. *See Zabriskie v. Fed. Nat. Mortg. Ass’n*, No. CV-13-02260-  
14 PHX-SRB, 2015 WL 3712072, at \*2 (D. Ariz. Mar. 30, 2015) (“[T]he Court . . . cannot  
15 conclude that a stay of the proceedings pending the appeal of *McCalmont* would  
16 necessarily promote judicial economy because it is too speculative to determine how, or on  
17 what grounds, the Ninth Circuit will rule.”).

#### 18 **B. A Stay Will Be Inefficient.**

19 Successive motions to dismiss for failure to state a claim upon which relief can be  
20 granted are disfavored when they would not serve the interests of judicial economy and  
21 would delay disposition of the case on the merits. *Cf. In re Apple iPhone Antitrust Litig.*,  
22 846 F.3d 313, 319 (9th Cir. 2017), *aff’d sub nom. Apple Inc. v. Pepper*, 139 S. Ct. 1514  
23 (2019). Here, there is no reason to do this piecemeal. If the Ninth Circuit rules in *Hobbs* in  
24 the near term, the parties can submit supplemental briefing at that time on its impact, if  
25 any, on this case. The Court is fully capable of applying intervening authority, just as the  
26 parties are capable of submitting supplemental briefing. That is why the District of  
27 Arizona’s Local Rules permit parties to move for reconsideration of any decision when  
28 there is new relevant case law. *See* L.R. Civ. 7.2(g)(1).

1           The Attorney General’s proposed alternative is simply wasteful. His approach  
2 would have the parties brief the merits of dismissal for two-and-a-half of Plaintiffs’ claims  
3 now, through three sets of briefs (opening, response, reply); then await the Ninth Circuit’s  
4 decision, which could be months off; and only then brief one-half of one claim. The most  
5 efficient course is for the parties to brief all of the claims now and submit any supplemental  
6 authority as necessary, if and when the Ninth Circuit resolves the pending *Hobbs* matter.

## 7   **II.    Plaintiffs Will Be Prejudiced By A Stay.**

8           Plaintiffs will be prejudiced by a stay. Plaintiffs filed this litigation in August 2021  
9 and the Plaintiff-Intervenors moved to intervene shortly thereafter. A 60-day stay “to be  
10 revisited” if a decision in *Hobbs* is not issued will hold up this litigation for months,  
11 potentially delaying or complicating discovery, and making it difficult for Plaintiffs to  
12 adequately protect their rights in advance of future elections.

13           None of the parties know when a decision in *Hobbs* will be issued. The Ninth Circuit  
14 is not required to decide the appeal in any particular timeframe. Although the Attorney  
15 General suggests “revisit[ing]” the necessity of a stay at the beginning of 2022 (AG Br. at  
16 8), that merely introduces still more complications. If *Hobbs* is not decided in the next 60  
17 days, the parties will either have to initiate briefing on one-half of Plaintiffs’  
18 *Anderson/Burdick* Claims separate from the rest of claims in the case, or the Court will  
19 need to pick another arbitrary period for a further stay. Either way, Plaintiffs will be  
20 prejudiced because they will be unable to defend their claims as pled—as a cohesive whole.  
21 This delay could preclude Plaintiffs from ever obtaining relief.

22           Moreover, in voting rights cases, the Court must always be mindful that there will  
23 come a time in the election cycle when, under the “*Purcell* doctrine,” it may be prudentially  
24 deemed too late to afford the plaintiffs with any injunctive relief in that election cycle.  
25 Indeed, it is this doctrine that the motions panel in *Hobbs* heavily focused on when it issued  
26 the stay order that the Attorney General relies upon. *See Hobbs*, 976 F.3d at 1086–87. 2022  
27 is a major election year in which Arizona will hold elections for (among many other  
28 offices) a U.S. Senator and representatives to the U.S. Congress. It is also a year in which

1 the election official defendants will be tasked with running elections under new  
2 congressional and state legislative maps.

3 This Court is thus faced not simply with a question of whether, in ordinary litigation,  
4 staying the one claim may promote some efficiencies, but whether, in doing so, the Court  
5 risks creating a situation where the delay may ultimately itself operate to deny Plaintiffs'  
6 requested relief. In addition, putting off case activity related to any of Plaintiffs' claims  
7 could serve to exacerbate the burdens on litigating this case as the state election official  
8 defendants are in the midst of preparing for the coming 2022 elections. Denying the  
9 Attorney General's motion will ensure that, whatever the Ninth Circuit ultimately does in  
10 *Hobbs* (whether that occurs in the next 60 days or later), this matter can proceed in its  
11 entirety (including with whatever portion of the *Anderson-Burdick* Claims that may need  
12 to still be resolved) expeditiously.

13 The Attorney General's argument that Plaintiffs have rested on their rights for "102  
14 years" (AG Br. at 6–7) is disingenuous. Arizona instituted no-excuse vote by mail in 1991  
15 and the PEVL was created in 2007. (Compl. ¶ 42.) Until 2019, counties determined whether  
16 and how voters could cure mismatched signature and unsigned ballots. *Arizona Democratic*  
17 *Party v. Hobbs*, 485 F. Supp. 3d 1073, 1081–82 (D. Ariz. 2020) (*appeal filed*). The  
18 legislature then enacted the five-day cure period for ballots with mismatched signatures,  
19 while remaining silent on cure for unsigned ballots. *Id.* Not until 2021 did the Arizona  
20 legislature enshrine an irrational distinction between missing and mismatched signatures  
21 in the election laws. Plaintiffs hardly could have sued over a law that did not yet exist, let  
22 alone did not yet exist in the electoral scheme as it is now. Further, the *Hobbs* plaintiffs  
23 sued and litigated the precursor to this irrational law not long after the Secretary first issued  
24 that guidance. Given the upcoming 2022 election, it is important that this case move  
25 forward at a reasonable pace to allow for a decision in advance of that election.

### 26 **III. Defendants Will Not Be Prejudiced In The Absence Of A Stay.**

27 The request for a stay is particularly unconvincing because the motion identifies no  
28 tangible benefit to keeping half of Plaintiffs' *Anderson/Burdick* Claims in limbo. The only



1 purported burden that the Attorney General identifies in the absence of a stay is having to  
2 brief an issue that he believes has been fully briefed already. (*See* AG Br. at 5–6.) The  
3 premise of that argument is incorrect; for the reasons discussed above, the issues here are  
4 materially different than in *Hobbs*. But regardless, there is no prejudice. If the Attorney  
5 General thinks that he already has briefed these issues, he can make the same arguments  
6 he made in *Hobbs* in his motion to dismiss in this case. *See Lockyer*, 398 F.3d at 1112  
7 (“being required to defend a suit, without more, does not constitute a ‘clear case of hardship  
8 or inequity’”).

#### 9 **IV. The *Hobbs* Motions Panel’s Stay Order Is Not Binding On This Court.**

10 Finally, the Attorney General’s implication that the *Hobbs* motions panel’s stay  
11 decision is binding not only on the Ninth Circuit, but also this Court, is misplaced. That  
12 order was issued in the context of emergency briefing on the Attorney General’s stay  
13 motion in the final weeks leading up to the November 2020 election. It had neither the  
14 benefit of full briefing or argument nor the luxury of time to methodically consider the  
15 record or relevant authority, and, in its very brief discussion of the merits of that case,  
16 elided over much of the complexities that inform undue burden challenges.<sup>2</sup>

17 Furthermore, the Attorney General’s argument ignores that, as the Ninth Circuit has  
18 repeatedly and unequivocally emphasized, *Anderson/Burdick* claims are highly fact  
19 specific. It may well be that this Court could determine, *based on the evidence presented*  
20 *to it*, that the burden of the missing signature deadline was more significant than the district  
21 court found in *Hobbs* (which that court repeatedly stressed was based on the evidence  
22 before it, *e.g.*, 485 F. Supp. 3d at 1081, 1083, 1089, 1092), which would then fundamentally  
23 change the nature of the showing that the state would have to make to avoid judgment for  
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25 <sup>2</sup> Although not squarely at issue here, the Attorney General’s continued argument that this  
26 order may be binding on the merits panel is refuted by very recent precedent of the Ninth  
27 Circuit itself. *See East Bay Sanctuary Covenant v. Biden*, 993 F.3d 640, 661 & n.3 (9th  
28 Cir. 2021) (confirming rule that a merits panel is bound by an earlier motions panel’s  
answers to “[1] pure questions of law [2] for which preexisting binding authority  
necessarily compelled the answer”).

1 the Plaintiffs. *See Soltysik v. Padilla*, 910 F.3d 438, 448–49 (9th Cir. 2018).<sup>3</sup>

2 Each case must be judged on its own merits; and postponing discovery on the  
3 *Anderson/Burdick* claim here, while the parties await the Ninth Circuit’s decision on the  
4 merits in *Hobbs*, unduly hampers Plaintiffs’ ability to build a record showing that the  
5 burden is more significant (and consequently requires a more demanding showing from the  
6 state to justify the rule, thus rendering it invalid even if the Ninth Circuit *were* to reverse  
7 the district court’s permanent injunction in *Hobbs*). Indeed, in *Cooper v. Harris*, the U.S.  
8 Supreme Court considered a case that challenged the North Carolina congressional map as  
9 a racial gerrymander. The exact same claim proceeded, on slightly different evidence,  
10 before a federal district court and a North Carolina State Court. The Supreme Court was  
11 clear: The plaintiffs in each case are entitled to make their case and courts of review must  
12 be highly deferential to the fact findings of the lower courts, which are necessarily based  
13 on the record before that court—not some other court considering similar or even identical  
14 claims. *See Cooper v. Harris*, 137 S. Ct. 1455, 1468 (2017). This logic and precedent  
15 similarly strongly counsels against granting the Attorney General’s motion to stay.

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22 <sup>3</sup> To be clear, Plaintiffs do not concede that the motions panel’s application of  
23 *Anderson/Burdick* was correct, including its conclusion that a state need only establish,  
24 where a burden is minimal, that a restriction “reasonably advances” its specific interests.  
25 Specifically, the panel’s conclusion that the state satisfied its burden so long as the  
26 restriction avoids *any* additional administrative burden (no matter how small), *Hobbs*, 976  
27 F.3d at 1085, cannot be reconciled with precedent establishing that mere administrative  
28 burdens, on their own, *cannot* justify burdening the right to vote. *See, e.g., Taylor v. Louisiana*, 419 U.S. 522, 535 (1975); *United States v. Berks Cnty.*, 250 F. Supp. 2d 525, 541 (E.D. Pa. 2003) (“Although these reforms may result in some administrative expenses . . . , such expenses are likely to be minimal and are far outweighed by the fundamental right at issue.”).

**CONCLUSION**

For the foregoing reasons, this Court should deny the Attorney General’s motion to stay.

Dated: November 15, 2021

Respectfully submitted,

*/s/ Lauren Elliott Stine*

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