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Arizona OKs Bill Cutting Funds to Cities That Cross State.

PHOENIX — Gov. Doug Ducey on Thursday signed legislation cutting state shared revenue from municipalities and counties that pass regulations like plastic bag bans that conflict with state law.

The action came hours after the organization representing all 91 Arizona cities and towns called on the Republican governor to veto the bill. The letter to Ducey from the League of Arizona Cities and Towns says the measure is heavy-handed and intrusive, and it minimizes the important role of local elected officials.

“The elimination of shared revenue from cities and towns is a crippling and unjust penalty since it represents an average of 40 percent of a city’s general fund,” said the letter signed by the mayors of Tempe, Lake Havasu City and Chandler in the roles as league leaders.

But Ducey was unpersuaded. He had vowed in his state-of-the-state address to cut state shared revenue to any city that adopted a minimum wage that was higher than the state’s, even though the law allows that.

“As Governor Ducey has made clear, for Arizona to be competitive, we can’t have a patchwork of different laws across the state,” spokeswoman Annie Dockendorff said in a statement. “This legislation ensures everyone is playing by the same rules.”

The state sent nearly \$1.1 billion from income and sales taxes to 91 cities and towns in the budget year that ended June 30.

The Republican-dominated Arizona Legislature has taken a firm stance in recent years against cities that enact laws popular in liberal enclaves, such as plastic-bag bans and rules governing energy efficiency in buildings.

The bill passed mainly along party lines, with all but four Republicans supporting it and all Democrats opposed.

Senate President Andy Biggs’ legislation allows an individual legislator to trigger an investigation of a municipal ordinance or regulation by complaining to the attorney general. Cities and towns would be penalized if the attorney general determined there was a conflict with state law or the Constitution. They would lose state funds if they didn’t rescind the action within 30 days.

“What possible hubris could drive one single legislator to think he or she has more wisdom than the local elected officials who have been chosen by the voters to govern their communities?” the mayors wrote. “What happened to the principle of ‘presumption of innocence’ in our legal system?”

Democrats argued it was hypocritical for Republican lawmakers who criticize the federal government for forcing Arizona to follow federal laws to turn around and do the same to cities and towns.

“Time and time again, we have heard the argument that the federal government should not use the

power of the purse or their influence to dictate to states what they should and shouldn't do," Rep. Reginald Bolding, D-Phoenix, said during a House debate Wednesday.

Republicans who voted against the bill in the House said they were concerned the penalties would harm ordinary citizens.

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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