Don’t get excited about the House of Representatives approving legislation involving the Keystone XL oil pipeline that would pass through Nebraska, including portions of the Sand Hills and the Ogallala Aquifer.

Sponsored by Republican Rep. Lee Terry of Omaha, it would require the U.S. State Department to make a decision by November on whether to issue a construction permit for the pipeline. The pipeline would move sand tar oil from Alberta, Canada to the Gulf Coast of Texas.

The House did send the bill to the Senate, but it’s likely to be there for a very long time. Its chances of enactment are minimal. Besides, the Obama administration previously said a decision was expectable before the end of the year.

The view from here: The most interesting thing to come out of the reportage on Terry’s bill was something he said about potential environmental risks. Get this:

“I’m vastly positive that any leaks that would occur are going to be minimal and not hazardous to the Ogallala Aquifer,” Terry said.

Well, goodness gracious!

Proponents and opponents of the pipeline ought to find that outburst interesting.

Given the recent incidents of pipeline spills, particularly those involving the Keystone crowd, that seems mighty optimistic. Even for a fortune teller. Especially when one considers the delicate nature of the enormous, but shallow, aquifer.

Add to that the independent study by a scientist at the University of Nebraska which said the company had greatly understated and underestimated the potential environmental risks

represented by the pipeline.

A footnote: When a controversial measure is passed by the House, it would be appropriate for reporters to insert a sentence or two noting the bill's next stop will be the U.S. Senate. And it would be a good idea if that sentence were pretty high up in the story.

Abortion opponents claim a victory

Supporters of Nebraska's groundbreaking 2010 antiabortion law can point to an apparent victory reflected figures compiled by the state Department of Health and Human Services.

The 2010 "fetal pain law" banned abortions after the 20th week of pregnancy. The law is based on the disputed assertion that a fetus can feel pain at that stage.

Preliminary reports show 1,153 abortions were performed in Nebraska during the first six months of this year. In 2010 the department noted 1,288 abortions in the same period.

The Nebraska law was the first in the country to move away from the viability standard adopted in the landmark Roe v. Wade decision of 1973. It generally allowed abortions until a fetus was viable outside the womb, generally considered to be between 22 and 24 weeks.

ED HOWARD *is the statehouse correspondent for the Nebraska Press Association.*