Telephone conference report held on Tues., Jan. 24

By Russ Pankonin

The Imperial Republican

Regulation of those automated phone calls land-line users get, especially during election season, will remain split between two state agencies.

Presently, the Nebraska Public Service Commission and the Nebraska Accountability and Disclosure Commission (NADC) share the responsibility.

LB 418 sought to move all of the regulation of robocalls, as they are often called, to the NADC.

Senator Heath Mello of Omaha led a filibuster against the bill last Friday, which continued into Monday.

When the bill's sponsor, Sen. John Nelson of Omaha, tried to end the filibuster, he needed 33 votes. He only got 26 votes, which all but kills the bill for this session.

The only way the bill could come back up for debate is if Nelson makes it one of his priority bills.

Alcohol compliance bill

Senators started debate Monday on LB 60, a bill that would prohibit minors from lying about their ages while working with police on alcohol sales compliance checks.

Christensen said honesty is always a good thing and “that’s where I’m falling on the bill.”

Enticing young people to lie during a compliance check sends the wrong message, he noted.

Under the bill, if a clerk or bartender asks the youth if they are underage, or if they are working with police, they must tell the truth.

The bill would also prohibit undercover officers from drinking if they were in a bar doing a compliance check.

Debate was scheduled to continue Tuesday.

STD treatment

Christensen said much of the remainder of the week will be spent on LB 304.

This bill LB304 would allow Expedited Partner Therapy (EPT) for the treatment of sexually-transmitted disease (STD).

EPT is the practice of allowing a physician, physician assistant, or advanced practice registered nurse who diagnoses a STD in a patient to prescribe medications to that patient’s partner(s)

without examination of said partner(s).

LB 304 also specifies that a pharmacist or physician may provide or dispense such medications along with any instructions for use or medication guides where applicable.

Christensen said he questions whether it's a good idea to dispense drugs without first seeing the partner.

Input on inheritance tax

Christensen said he's seeking input from constituents on Gov. Heineman's proposal to eliminate the inheritance tax.

Right now, cities and counties collect the tax, which is often used to pay for projects that could not be paid for from the general budget, i.e., infrastructure.

Last year, the Legislature discontinued any state aid to counties as part of a cost-cutting move to balance the budget.

Christensen said he wants to hear how people feel about the issue.

Some fear that if the inheritance tax goes away, it could result in higher property taxes.

He said the City of Lincoln receives about $6.7 million in inheritance tax. They budget for that money and don't know where they could make it up, other than higher property taxes.

Christensen said there's also some discussion of lowering the respective tax rates as opposed to eliminating the tax altogether.

SEN. MARK CHRISTENSEN holds weekly teleconferences at 7 a.m. MT/8 a.m. CT each Tuesday morning. The public is invited to attend the conference calls. Hosts of the conference calls are Imperial Republican in Imperial, Southwest Public Power District in Palisade and Midwest Electric in Grant. Christensen can be reached at 402-471-2805, or by mail at P.O. Box 94604, Lincoln, NE 68509, or via e-mail at mchristensen@leg.ne.gov.