

Fate of funding to the water reserve cash fund in the air

Written by Wauneta Breeze

Friday, 06 April 2012 19:16 - Last Updated Friday, 06 April 2012 19:18

Telephone conference

report held on

Tuesday, April 3

By Russ Pankonin

The Imperial Republican

With the governor approving budget bills sent to his desk on Monday, other bills remaining on the floor over spend the budget by about \$7 million. That means Sen. Mark Christensen's LB 950 could be in jeopardy.

In his weekly teleconference call held Monday, Christensen said he doesn't know what to expect on the fate of the bill.

The bill would move this year's loan repayments to the state by Republican Basin natural resources districts from the general budget to the Water Resources Cash Fund.

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This year's repayments will total \$2.4 million, with \$4.8 million remaining for two more years.

The state loaned the money to the NRDs to enable them to buy surface water to keep Nebraska in compliance with the Kansas compact settlement.

If the Legislature approves the bill, they will have to make some cuts in other places.

However, Gov. Dave Heineman used his line-item veto to strike out nearly \$2.5 million in LB 1072, one of the budget bills forwarded to him Monday.

This appropriation was to pay subcontractors of The Boys and Girls Home, one of the private companies who took over foster care for the state.

Christensen said this represents money owed to businesses, mostly in western Nebraska, who did work for the Boys and Girls Home, relating to foster care needs.

Christensen said that veto represents the amount of money needed for his bill, LB 950.

He said he doesn't want to see the businesses in western Nebraska get stuck for expenses they incurred for the foster care companies.

As a result, he said it will be difficult to put his bill in front of getting those people paid.

He noted in the call that he killed his bill, LB 653, which sought to create legislative authority for interbasin transfers of unappropriated, unallocated flood waters.

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When it looked like that bill wouldn't fly, he amended it to look at constructing three small dams below Harlan for time releases to Kansas. He also added a study using wells of Nebraska Public Power near the Gentleman generating station at Sutherland as another source for transfers.

When it looked like the bill had no hope, Christensen chose to kill it.

He was discouraged the bill faced opposition from the "same old water groups" that oppose everything. "You can't get anything done," he noted.

The Legislature advanced historic horse racing to final reading. Even if it gets the 25 votes to pass, he expects the governor to veto it.

This week's letter back home

By Mark Christensen

Senator

The 102nd Nebraska Legislature is fast approaching the last day of session. Thursday, April 12 is the scheduled 60th day but it looks like there could be a delay in Sine Die, due to the large number of bill's being passed.

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In order to prevent the possibility of the governor vetoing a last minute bill following Sine Die, it appears the speaker will wait five days following the last bill that reaches the governor's desk.

That would make the final day April 18.

The past week at the Legislature consisted of several days of lively debate and a disappointing end to LB 239.

LB 239, also known as the photo ID bill, was introduced by Senator Charlie Janssen of Fremont. LB 239 requires an individual to present a photographic identification in order to vote in elections.

The Government, Military and Veteran Affairs Committee attached an amendment to the bill that would allow individuals who lacked identification the ability to receive a registration card for voting purposes.

After a lengthy debate and filibuster, the cloture motion failed by 3 votes, 30-16-1 and 2 excused, taking the bill off the agenda.

Tightening voter ID laws, is legislation that has been passed in several other states as a prevention for voter fraud and to protect the integrity of the voting process.

In years past, elections have ended with extremely close results between candidates, which is why I viewed this bill as important and needed. Candidates deserve an election process that does not allow fraudulent voters the ability to vote.

I would like to thank all my constituents that voiced their thoughts and concerns regarding LB 239.

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Questions or comments? Contact, Senator Mark R. Christensen at the information below.

SENATOR 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.