

## **Showdown expected between Legislature and governor on LB 599**

Written by Wauneta Breeze

Wednesday, 11 April 2012 20:48 - Last Updated Wednesday, 11 April 2012 21:08

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**By Russ Pankonin**

**The Imperial Republican**

The political posturing in Lincoln grabbed much of the attention this week as the Legislature and Gov. Dave Heineman stake out positions on LB 599.

The bill would provide pre-natal care for low-income Nebraskans, as well as illegal immigrants in the state.

In his weekly newspaper column this week, Heineman made his case why he opposes the legislation. He went as far as to name the 29 senators who voted to advance the bill to final reading.

Sen. Mark Christensen of Imperial, in both his weekly teleconference call Tuesday and his letter back home, outlined why he voted for the bill.

“Bottom line, my support for LB599 comes directly from my pro-life position. In good conscience I could not jeopardize the health of an unborn child because of the decision of the mother, whether I believe her decisions were good, bad, or illegal,” he said.

Unfortunately, since the federal government has yet to address illegal immigration to effectively control U.S. borders and improve the immigration system, Christensen said the states are left with trying to figure out how to deal with the consequences. As a result, he said many good people come down on opposite sides of this difficult issue, having to prioritize immigration over pro-life.

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Christensen said some pro-life senators who have put the immigration issue above the pro-life issue of the bill are already feeling the heat.

“You can look at the expressions on their faces when they vote that they’re feeling stressed to side with the governor,” he said Tuesday.

One colleague told Christensen he’d just as soon be voting with him. However, constituent emails favored the governor’s position so that’s how he was going to vote.

The governor is concerned Nebraska will become a magnet for illegal immigrants seeking pre-natal health care.

Christensen said that did not appear to be the case when Nebraska provided this kind of care before ending it six years ago.

Since then, he said statistics show the abortion rates have increased in this demographic during the time-frame, along with an increase in extreme care births.

If illegal immigrants show up at an emergency room for pre-natal treatment, they can’t be turned away, he noted. So one way or another, the taxpayer pays.

In one instance, he said lack of pre-natal care for an immigrant mother, which would have cost about \$300, resulted in complications that cost state taxpayers \$800,000.

The cost of the bill is \$2.49 million with the state footing the bill for about \$773,000 with federal aide picking up the rest.

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Christensen said the bill passed 29-16 on second reading and he expected those numbers to go up to at least 30 on final reading, which was expected Wednesday.

### **Final day delayed to April 18**

With LB 599 and other bills going to the governor on the 59th day, Speaker Mike Flood has rescheduled the final day of the 60-day session for Wednesday, April 18.

The governor must act on bills within five days of getting them from the Legislature.

If the Legislature were to adjourn this Thursday, April 12, as scheduled, the body would not be able to override any vetoes on bills sent Wednesday, April 18.

Plus, the governor would not even have to act on those bills since the Legislature would be adjourned. Any bills not signed by the governor automatically die. This is known as a pocket veto by the governor.

To avoid that situation, Flood delayed the final day, forcing the governor to act on all bills sent on the 59th day.

This maneuver allows the Legislature to option to override any of the governor's vetoes. Christensen expects an override attempt should the governor veto LB 599. A total of 30 votes are needed to override a veto.

Senators sent a bill to the governor to allow historic horse race betting in Nebraska but he vetoed it.

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Christensen does not expect the body will have enough votes to override the veto. The measure passed with just 26 votes.

As for his bill, LB 950, to move loan repayments from the Republican Basin natural resources into the water resources cash fund, he made a compromise to save the bill.

This year's repayments to the state will total \$2.4 million. Christensen wanted all of that money to go into the water resources cash fund.

However, due to budgetary constraints, Christensen agreed to reduce the amount paid into the fund to \$1.4 million.

He said it's better to get that than nothing. The bill passed and is awaiting action by the governor.

Questions or comments? Constituents are urged to contact Christensen at either of these following two contacts: Senator Mark R. Christensen, PO Box 94604, Lincoln, NE 68509; 402-471-2805.

**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](mailto:mchristensen@leg.ne.gov).*