

By Mark Christensen

State Sen. 44th District

It is another busy week in Lincoln for me and I look forward to the last of my 2012 bills having their committee hearings.

Senator priority bills and committee priority bills have been declared and many of those bills have been scheduled for debate on the floor this week.

I will further discuss priority bills as well as discuss Legislative Bill 1043 for this week's Letter Back Home.

I am excited and fortunate to have two priority bills this year, with a chance for a third. I chose (as my priority bill this year) LB 653, which provides for interbasin transfers during times of flooding.

The Natural Resources Committee has also chosen my bill, LB 950 as a committee priority bill. It redirects repayments from the Republican River NRD's to the state for assistance that they received in 2008 to pay farmers not to irrigate in 2007.

These funds would be redirected to the Water Resource Cash Fund to help provide water management needs throughout Nebraska.

Speaker priority bills have not been decided, I did request the speaker to consider LB 1125.

This bill seeks to provide the ability for Natural Resources Districts (NRDs) to refund the occupation tax on the activity of irrigation authorized in section 2-3226.05 to landowners in certain circumstances.

Discounted Power Rates

Senator Chris Langemeier's bill, LB 1043, was heard and advanced on the floor this week with a 33-0 vote. LB 1043 amends current contracts and agreements for discounted rates involving public power districts.

In essence, it removes the requirement of a general retail rate increase for new or expanding businesses.

Current law allows public power districts and electric cooperatives to provide businesses that meet certain electric load requirements and that qualify as an economic development project, rates that are effective for no more than five years and then revert to a standard rate.

I view this as a beneficial and important bill to the economic development of our state. This is a good endeavor to giving big businesses an incentive to locate their business in the State of Nebraska and bring better paying jobs.

Hearings on Bills

Other upcoming hearings for bills that I have introduced include:

LB 1084—requires all lands leased by the Board of Educational Lands and Funds be open to the public for hunting, fur harvesting and fishing on Feb. 21.

LB 785—authorizes the transportation and storage of firearms in vehicles in parking lots open to the public on Feb. 22.

LB 1170—changes provisions of separate segregated political funds under the Nebraska Political Accountability and Disclosure Act. Provides better paycheck protection for people who have dues and fees used for political purposes on Feb. 24.

LB 1171 — adopts the Nebraska Balance of Powers Act and creates the Committee on Nullification Laws on Feb. 24.

LB 653 on the Agenda

During his weekly teleconference Tuesday, Christensen said LB 653 is on the agenda. However with only 11 hours of debate scheduled this week, he doesn't expect it to get debated this week.

The time may be helpful though as he responds to concerns expressed by entities that could be impacted by the legislation.

He said Sen. Tom Carlson's legislative resolution to change term limits from two terms to three will get lots of debate time this week.

This marks the final week of hearings. With those complete, full-day sessions of floor debate will begin.

Questions or comments? Contact the senator or his staff at the address and phone number below.

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