By Jan Schultz

The Imperial Republican

Imperial's Mark Christensen has filed for re-election to the District 44 state legislative seat he now holds.

A check with the Secretary of State's website shows Christensen is the first to put his name on the line for the May 11, 2010 Primary Election for the seat that includes Chase County.

Former state senator Tom Baker of Trenton announced recently he intends to run, but as of Tuesday, Nov. 24 had not yet filed with the Secretary of State.

From his office in Lincoln, where Christensen remains this week for the special legislative session, he said water will continue to be one of the top issues as he seeks another four-year term in the legislature.

During the 2010 session, which starts in January, Christensen said he will introduce legislation that would allow NRDs, after approval from its district's voters, to levy an additional tax within their own district to deal with water issues.

In an email sent to area newspapers, Christensen said, "Water has been a huge issue in the district since 2000 and still needs to be finished.

"Leadership and understanding the issue have been the dividing factors" between the drought of 2000 and today, he added.

“The water issue has been ignored and not dealt with for far too long,” he added.

Christensen said the state has not done enough to deal with the issue, and said his LB 701 did accomplish getting the basin out of a water short year and balancing the first five-year average.

However, litigation challenging measures within LB 701 has set things back, he acknowledged.

But, he added, “I have attacked from the start and brought forth the only solution to prevent a total shut-off as has been proposed by the Department of Water Resources.

“Local solutions are always better than what is proposed from state government,” he said.

Christensen said he’s also been pleased to work on other issues.

Included has been “the ability to clean up legislation on concealed handguns left in place before I was elected,” he said.

He also cited his work on tough pro-life issues, which included support for a ban on human cloning and, secondly, working to increase adult stem cell research instead of using embryonic stem cells.

On the latter, Christensen said there have not been any cures from embryonic stem cell research, but several advances are being realized using adult stem cells.

Christensen said working with senators on each side of an issue is an important virtue to being a success in the legislature.

He feels his ability to listen to people when issues get emotional is one of his strengths as a state senator.

Christensen was elected in 2006, taking office in January, 2007.

He’s served on the banking, commerce and insurance committee since taking office. The past two years, he’s also been on the natural resources and judiciary committees, as well as the executive board. He’s also on the legislature’s reference committee, which determines the committee to which bills are assigned.

Christensen farms, ranches and is a business broker. He and his wife, Kathy, have seven children and two grandchildren.

Special Session Expected to Conclude on Friday

Christensen said the special session that started Nov. 4 on closing the $334 million funding gap in the state’s two-year budget should conclude on Friday, Nov. 27.

He noted from an original 16 bills introduced, senators had narrowed them to four.

Among the measures is a two and a half percent cut this year, and five percent reduction next year to most state agency budgets.