

Telephone conference report to Grant, Palisade on Tuesday, May 17.

By Jan Rahn

Managing Editor

Over-booked for the morning, Sen. Mark Christensen did a quick 20-minute run-down on the status of a few bills in the Nebraska Legislature during his Tuesday morning teleconference before heading off for a busy day.

Travel Policy

Christensen has three proposals before the Executive Board regarding travel policy.

He said they put into place a \$1,500 maximum reimbursement per senator, noting some senators went to every conference there is just to use it as an excuse to vacation or travel—so they're putting a cap on it.

Christensen's three proposals include giving senators the ability to:

- 1) spend \$1,500 to go to any legislative conference(s),
- 2) go to only the dues-paying conferences, or
- 3) keep the current policy but clarify language.

LB 528 Up for Next Year

Senator Carlson's LB528 bill came out of committee last week to extend the NRD's three-cent levy that has been set up for getting plans in place if full or overly appropriated.

Christensen said he campaigned against the bill so he will not support it.

"I told people that I believe that a property tax levy that's set up to start a program and had an exact ending date was supposed to be ended," he said.

He said he extended it for four years during his freshman year in the legislature—now it's going to expire. It got out of committee and will be ready to be dealt with next year.

"I don't have the three NRDs happy with my stance, but that's the way I campaigned and I'm going to stick with it," he said.

Christensen said it was not intended to be a forever on-going tax.

The bill eliminates the sunset date which would give a permanent three-cent increase forever.

"I was hoping it didn't get out of committee, but it has. It'll be one to debate early in the session next year."

CIR Negotiations (LB397)

CIR negotiations don't seem to be going very well, said Christensen.

The bill would redefine the terms of the Commission of Industrial Relations (CIR).

Changes would leave the CIR in place to become only recommendations, and not enforcers, meaning it would come back to local boards for final authority, said Christensen.

"I'm torn on this, because I believe that's where the power should be (with boards), but at the same time think it basically eliminates the CIR and you ought to just eliminate it if you're going to eliminate it!" said Christensen.

The governor is expected to veto the bill in its current form, but Christensen does not think it will be adjusted from its current form easily.

"I think it will end up heading to the initiative process," said Christensen. "It will be interesting when it comes back up to see where we go with it, because I'm not sure it can get done in its current form."

The CIR is a commission that works as an arbitrator when unionized public employees and public entities have contract disputes.

LB521 Chemical Abortion

Christensen said LB521 is one of the bigger bills senators are dealing with.

The measure, which criminalizes administering abortion-inducing drugs via telemedicine, got first round approval 33-9.

As written, the bill could potentially prohibit all telemedicine, said Christensen, but he doesn't think it will do that if it's drafted correctly.

"The lawyers gotta get that figured out," he said. "It is one I supported."

Redistricting Hearings

Hearings were held May 13 by the Redistricting Committee via video conference.

There was not a lot of attendance, said Christensen, who himself was planting corn.

Locations around the state hosted a video conference to hear testimony on the committee's proposed congressional and legislative redistricting plans.

No one showed at the McCook site, he said, with the most at any one site being around 25 residents.

Christensen's district (44) is slated to stay the same, gaining Gosper and Harlan counties.

Game and Parks LB421

Senators voted to override Gov. Heineman's veto on LB421 to increase annual park entry permit fees for both residents and non-residents of the state of Nebraska.

The measure passed Tuesday morning without the governor's signature.

Hunting/Trapping

A proposed constitutional amendment (LR40CA) entered first round debate, but won't be back this year, said Sen. Christensen.

He is concerned with the language of the measure that would give lifetime rights to fish-trap-hunt, thinking, for instance, it could give people the idea they have the ability to file claims if a river dried up.

The bill will be worked on over the summer, he said.

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Constituents with questions, comments or concerns may contact Christensen at 402-471-2805.

Other information is also available at his legislative website:

<http://news.legislature.ne.gov/dist44/>

SENATOR MARK CHRISTENSEN holds a weekly teleconference at 7 a.m. MT each Tuesday with sites at the Imperial Republican, Midwest Electric in Grant and Southwest Public Power in Palisade. The teleconferences are open to the public and Christensen encourages constituent participation.