

By Russ Pankonin

The Imperial Republican

After looking over Tuesday's agenda for the Legislature, Sen. Mark Christensen said time's running out on getting his priority bill passed this session.

LB 390 would remove the power under the Emergency Act, that allows the Governor to suspend or limit the sale, dispensing or transportation of firearms.

In addition, the bill would clarify that the current state and federal laws regulating firearms and ammunition would still be applied.

The governor or any political subdivision would not be able to expand or tighten their regulation of firearms and ammunition and hinder the lawful possession, sale or transportation of firearms and ammunition during a declared emergency.

He said the bill also removes the prohibition for re-enactors of historic events to bring guns from the period on school grounds during a re-enactment event.

To move his bill from Select File (second reading) to Final Reading, the bill had to get a vote on Tuesday.

However, his bill was moved to the later part of Tuesday's agenda.

On Monday, senators met until midnight. He expected the same to occur on Tuesday night.

However, he said the number of bills ahead of his could eat up all the debate time Tuesday.

He said debate on several Select File bills on Tuesday's agenda could fill the full four hours of debate. If that happens, Christensen said there simply won't be time to get his bill discussed.

Essentially, that would kill the bill because there are only three days left in the session after Tuesday.

Plus, a bill must sit over a day before advancing to final reading. That would mean the body would have to vote on it in the final day. Christensen said that's unlikely.

Led Opposition on LB 485

Christensen and Sen. Beau McCoy led a successful four-hour filibuster effort Monday to kill LB 485.

The bill would have made it an unlawful employment practice for an employer, an employment agency or a labor organization to discriminate against an individual on the basis of sexual

orientation.

By debating the bill the full four hours, a cloture vote to end debate was called. The vote failed to garner the required 33 votes that would have put the bill up for a vote on Select File.

Christensen said he had lots of input from constituents in his district opposed to the bill.

Water Bill LB 1098

After considerable debate on the bill last week, the bill was pulled back to allow Sponsor Sen. Tom Carlson to re-draft an amiable amendment to all parties to get the bill passed.

Discussion on the amendment took place Tuesday afternoon. The amendment was approved and the bill advanced to final reading.

Christensen said the new amendment to the bill would make the bill applicable only to the Republican River Basin.

It would require water users in the basin to develop a basin-wide management plan. However, this plan would not override Integrated Management Plans in place by natural resources districts in the basin.

It also removed language from the bill that the objective of the basin-wide plan was to stop groundwater declines.

Previous language that had the potential of shutting down groundwater irrigation in the basin has been removed.

Christensen said the bill didn't give surface water users and groundwater users everything they sought. But he felt it was a good compromise going forward.

The key factor will be bringing the different parties in the basin to the same table, he said, in hopes of fostering an attitude of working together.