



## Legislative Update and Current Events Report

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### 2007 LEGISLATURE REVIEW

- The Nebraska Legislature adjourned its 90-day session on May 31, 2007. This long session convened way back on January 3, 2007.
- During the session, 705 legislative bills were introduced. Over the course of the session, 230 were killed in committee and 214 were passed into law. The remaining bills are either still in committee or out on the floor, and remain alive for the 2008 60-day session.
- This 2007 legislature had 22 new senators due to term limits kicking in.
- There were many, who believed the loss of so many of the experienced senators would result in a less competent body of lawmakers.
- We have dealt closely with the legislature for about fifteen years. It is our view that this group of state senators was top drawer. By and large, they were independent, energetic, fair-minded and professional. There were far fewer egos and personal agendas on display.
- The Natural Resources Committee (NRC), which hears all legislative proposals involving water and irrigation, was particularly exemplary. Each and every senator on the NRC acted fairly and professionally. The chairman was even-tempered, patient and polite to all who appeared to testify. The whole ambiance in the hearing room was healthier and conducive to productive discourse and interaction between testifiers and senators. We commend each and every senator on the NRC.

#### Senators on the Natural Resources Committee

Senator LeRoy Loudon (Chairman) . . . . .	Ellsworth
Senator Tom Carlson . . . . .	Holdrege
Senator Mark Christensen . . . . .	Imperial
Senator Arnette Dubas . . . . .	Fullerton
Senator Deb Fisher . . . . .	Valentine
Senator Carol Hudkins . . . . .	Malcolm
Senator Gail Koppin . . . . .	Gretna
Senator Norm Wallman . . . . .	Cortland

➤ *On the waterfront there were two legislative bills of major importance, LB 701 and LB 594.*

### LB 701 - DESPERATE TIMES DEMAND DESPERATE MEASURES

*LB 701 - A legislative bill seeking to help get the state of Nebraska in compliance with the terms of the 2002 settlement agreement with Kansas over Republican River water use.*

On April 26, 2007, without a single dissenting vote, LB 701 was adopted by the legislature. Governor Heineman signed the bill into law on May 1, proclaiming it as "vital legislation that will help us become better stewards of our state's most valuable natural resources." The Omaha World Herald, in its now familiar anti-irrigation tone, called LB 701 "the bill to bail out the Republican River basin." State Senator Tom Carlson of Holdrege, who is a member of the Unicameral's Natural Resources Committee (NRC), called LB 701 "hurtful, scary legislation" that

represents the biggest tax increase in the history of the Republican River basin (RRB). The Speaker of the Legislature, Senator Mike Flood of Norfolk, said LB 701 was a bill developed through cooperation of Governor Heineman, members of the Legislature, Republican River basin natural resources districts, and the State Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Flood added that LB 701 was a "tough-to-swallow solution."

Nebraskans First Executive Director Don Adams testified at the second LB 701 public hearing that LB 701 "takes a problem that is clearly a statewide responsibility and heaps it almost totally onto the backs of Republican River basin irrigators and property owners." State Senator Mark

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