

## **NEBRASKANS FIRST DEFENDS IRRIGATORS' RIGHTS AND OPPOSES NEW LB 701 TAXES AT PUBLIC HEARING**

Because LB 701 was so dramatically altered from its original version, a rare second public hearing on the amended version was held before the Natural Resources Committee on April 4, 2007. Here are some excerpts from Executive Director Don Adams' testimony that afternoon at the State Capitol:

- 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.
- This abdication of state responsibility is unprecedented in our history, and threatens the economic viability of the Republican River Basin while placing an undue financial burden on a small class of Nebraska citizens who have done nothing wrong or irresponsible.
- We cannot support any new taxes on irrigators. They are already paying through the gills. Property taxes on their irrigated land is double compared to dryland, and roughly three times higher than their Kansas counterparts currently pay.
- Today, the Republican River is nowhere near the system it was back in 1943 when the Compact was entered into. In 1943, there were no terraces or dams. The river was free flowing, starting in northwest Kansas where Beaver, Sappa and Prairie Dog Creeks flowed into Nebraska, unobstructed. When Harlan Dam was

constructed over fifty years ago, it was filled and sustained by free flowing water from these Kansas creeks. This free flowing system changed dramatically when the federal government in the mid 1980's mandated and paid for conservation measures, primarily terracing.

- Right now there are roughly 1/2 million acre feet of water being held back from flowing into Harlan. There is no drainage anymore out of northwest Kansas into Nebraska. The river system can no longer flow and feed Harlan as was the plan envisioned when Harlan Dam was constructed. Harlan has been rendered essentially useless due to the terracing in northwest Kansas.
- Because of this reengineering and manipulation of the system, Kansas has got us by the short hairs both coming and going. This unfair situation must be addressed now.
- The huge impact of conservation measures on Republican River flow from northwest Kansas into Nebraska must be acknowledged and fully and fairly accounted for in the model. I implore this committee to wrap your arms around this issue and take whatever action necessary to have conservation measures fully accounted for before we ask more from our irrigators.
- If I were governor, I would drag Kansas kicking and screaming back to the table to get conservation measures fully accounted for.

## **NEW WELL MORATORIUM ATTEMPT 'POUNDED' -LB 594 GOES DOWN IN FLAMES**

On March 8, 2007 the NRC held a public hearing on LB 594 - a proposal introduced by Omaha Senator Gail Kopplin that sought to put a statewide two-year moratorium on the drilling of new irrigation wells. It seems like every year some form of this restrictive concept materializes at the State Capitol. As has been the case in the past, Nebraskans First took the lead in opposing this unwarranted and overly restrictive approach to managing our groundwater resources. We greatly value and defend local control and management of groundwater by our natural resources districts. If groundwater management is ever given to the state DNR, we will be in the dangerous situation of a single,

unelected state bureaucrat controlling all of Nebraska's precious water resources. Such is the case in Kansas. Prior to the public hearing, about fifty of our members came to Lincoln, lunched together, heard a briefing from Executive Director Don Adams, Senator Mark Christensen and Senator Cap Dierks, and then proceeded together over to the Capitol. At the hearing, we filled the room and led the opposition to LB 594.

Mr. Adams testified against LB 594 at the public hearing. Following are excerpts of his testimony:

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