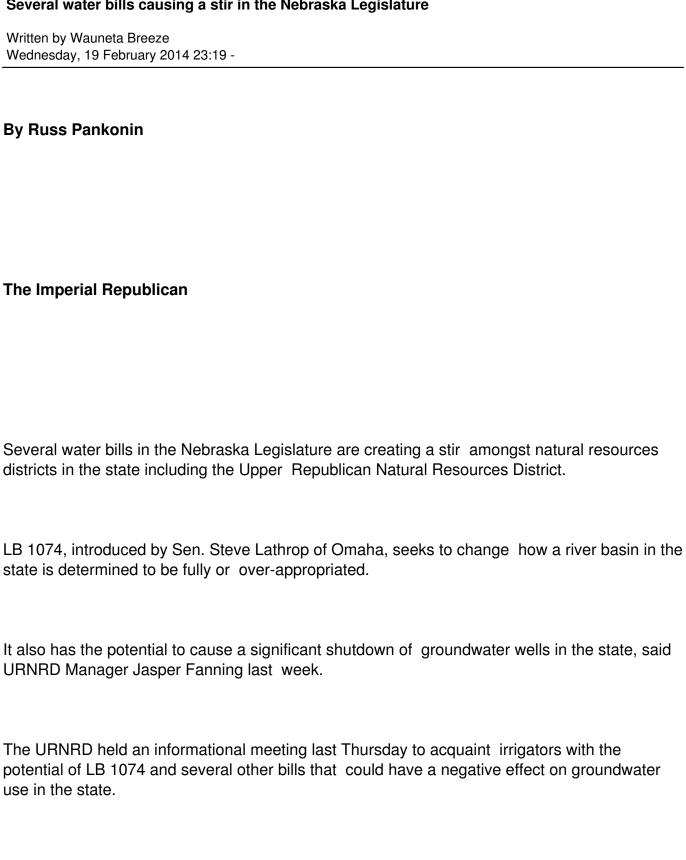
Several water bills causing a stir in the Nebraska Legislature



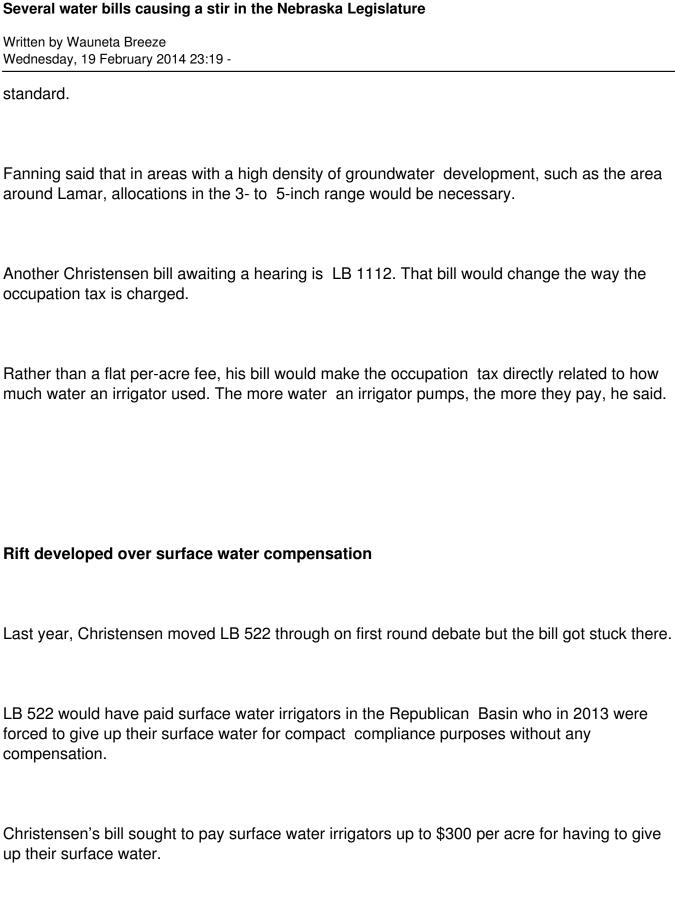
Today (Thursday), the Natural Resources Committee will hold a hearing on Sen. Mark

This bill would force the NRDs to rework their integrated management plans so that

groundwater pumping created no net depletions. They would have until 2025 to achieve that

Christensen's LB 1111.

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Christensen said this week it simply wasn't fair to shut down surface water irrigators without

any compensation while groundwater irrigators were able to pump their full allocation.

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Written by Wauneta Breeze Wednesday, 19 February 2014 23:19 -

After passage on first round debate, Sen. Tom Carlson of Holdrege, chairman of the Natural Resources Committee, withdrew any further support for the bill while the surface water districts seeking compensation had lawsuits pending against the state.

For all practical purposes that stalled the bill.

Christensen said the speaker said no hold-over bills would be brought to the floor this session unless prioritized. Christensen did not prioritize the bill this session so the only way it could move is with a committee priority designation.

That would have to come from Carlson's Natural Resources Committee, which seems unlikely.

Christensen said this week the Nebraska Association of Resource Districts testified neutral on the compensation bill. However, he said it was NRDs and their association lobbyist that helped get the bill shelved.

They got want they wanted last year by stopping the bill, he said, and they are the only ones who can go to Carlson and get it resurrected with a priority designation.

As a form of retaliation, Christensen introduced this session's water bills, which could have an adverse effect on groundwater pumping not only in the Republican Basin but statewide.

He said he saw that action as the only avenue to bring groundwater users back to the table to try to work out some way to get surface water users compensated if it happens again in the future.

This week, Christensen said that if he could get compensation for surface waters in the eastern end of his district, he'd work to try to kill LB 1074.

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Written by Wauneta Breeze Wednesday, 19 February 2014 23:19 -

Water funding another pawn

After last year's session, Carlson conducted a water task force study. One of the outcomes included a recommendation to include \$50 million annually in the state budget to deal with the state's ongoing water issues.

Fanning said the water funding bill has become a pawn in the battle over both LB 1074 and the Medicaid Expansion bill.

Fanning said it's been implied by some senators that water funding is tied to passing some type of LB 1074. If that's the case, Fanning said the \$50 million is not as important as stopping LB 1074.

Christensen said he's also been approached by Medicaid expansion supporters offering to vote for water funding if he'll vote for Medicaid expansion.

He said he doesn't trade votes so if it means no water funding, he's fine with that.