

NEW MEXICO SENATE DEMOCRATS

For immediate release
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Senate Review: February 19, 2013

Passed Bill Allows for Commercial Plant Inventories to be Inspected for Pests

A bill that will authorize state inspectors to review the plant inventories of in-state nurseries and florists as well as those within a growing number of “big-box” stores passed the Senate 39-0 on Tuesday. Senate Bill 184, the Plant Protection Act Changes, also seeks to control the spread of pests from plants identified as requiring quarantine and destruction.

SB184, sponsored by Joseph Cervantes, (Dona Ana, District 31), also will allow inspectors to review a nursery’s or florist’s inventory documentation to determine the origination of plant stock to ensure they are in compliance of federal and state viability standards so that they can verify the plants are free of destructive pests and diseases. The proposed amendment to the Plant Protection Act, which would apply to all nurseries and florists statewide, wholesalers, individual sellers and to all plants grown in New Mexico, also allows for a nursery in violation to be closed until all pests are cleared and the facility passes inspection. SB 184 now goes to the house.

Bill Would Let Agencies Purchase Safety Equipment for Police Dogs

The state Senate unanimously passed a bill Tuesday that will allow law-enforcement agencies throughout the state the ability to purchase protective vests and other safety equipment for police dogs. On a vote of 39-0, Senate Bill 141, sponsored by Senator Howie Morales (Catron, Grant Socorro, District 28), changes the purpose of the Law Enforcement Fund to include buying the safety equipment for the police dogs. SB 141 will head to the House of Representatives for consideration.

State Engineer Briefs Senate Conservation Committee Regarding Texas Lawsuit

The Senate Conservation Committee conducted an Executive Session to hear from the newly Senate-approved state engineer, Scott A. Verhines, about the State of Texas water lawsuit against the State of New Mexico for increased water releases from Elephant Butte Reservoir. Conservation chairman Senator Peter Wirth announced during Tuesday’s floor session that the committee would hear from the state engineer regarding water issues specifically concerning Senate Bill 440, Lower Rio Grande Water Rights, sponsored by Senator Joseph Cervantes (Dona

Ana, District 31). As of 6 p.m. the committee was still in executive and no action had been taken on the bill.

Senate Finance Committee holds over Senate Bill 27

Senate bill 27, regarding Public Employee Retirement Changes, was held over by the Senate Finance Committee. The sponsor of the bill, Senator George Munoz (Cibola, McKinley, San Juan, District 4) said he anticipates the committee to hear the bill next Monday.

In other Senate Action:

* Senator Jacob Candelaria (D, Bernalillo, District 26) is the sponsor of SB 222, Change Nominating Petition Forms, which would require people collecting petition signatures for election candidates to sign and date the petition forms on each page as well as provide their contact information. If the information is not provided, all the petition signatures on the form would be declared invalid. This bill creates accountability in the petition process and addresses issues that came up during the 2012 primary election when petition signatures were determined to be forged. SB 222 is on the Senate Rules calendar for Wednesday, February 20. The committee meets at 8:30 a.m. in Room 321.

* The Senate passed Senate Joint Memorial 35, which officially gave recognition to Joe Cisneros of Questa. The memorial, sponsored by Senator Carlos Cisneros (Los Alamos, Rio Arriba, Santa Fe, Taos, District 6) honors Joe Cisneros (no relation to Senator Cisneros) for his courageous stand against mining companies in the Questa area that discriminated against workers and damaged the land. The mining area Joe Cisneros stood up for was declared a federal super cleanup site in 2007. Author John Nichols has said that Joe Cisneros was the inspiration for the fictional "Joe Mondragon," the main character in the whimsical novel "The Milagro Beanfield War."