

Freudenthal signs number of bills

By JARED MILLER

Star-Tribune capital bureau

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CHEYENNE -- Gov. Dave Freudenthal signed into law Wednesday a measure that will allow counties to regulate large-acre land developments -- but he said the law may not do enough to protect land buyers.

Senate File 11 closes a loophole in state law that has prevented counties from regulating land developments larger than 35 acres, the result of which has been a proliferation of 40-acre plots free from county regulations.

County and state officials have complained that the lack of authority has allowed developers to pass along the cost of some services to government. They also say developers haven't done a good job in some cases of disclosing the lack of amenities like access to water to buyers.

The law, which takes effect July 1, will require developers to more clearly disclose what services are available. In cases where no central water system will be available, for example, the seller must disclose the fact in bold-face type in important sale documents.

Freudenthal, who signed a number of bills into law Wednesday, said the provision wasn't sufficient.

"It probably doesn't go as far as it needs to in the context of making sure that people who are buying land actually have some idea of whether they are going to have water and roads," Freudenthal said during a meeting with reporters. "But I think it's an important step and I was glad to sign it."

Here's a quick look at some other bills the governor signed:

-- Senate File 21 will allow students who lose their state-funded Hathaway scholarships because of poor performance to get back into the program by taking remedial steps.

To re-qualify, students would have to pay for the remedial steps themselves.

Opponents of the bill said it makes the Hathaway program an entitlement.

The bill becomes effective immediately.

-- Senate File 65 will bring Wyoming in line with about 40 other states that allow wrongly convicted prisoners to prove their innocence with DNA evidence.

Despite the exoneration of more than 200 convicted prisoners across America with genetic evidences, Wyoming laws provided no way to introduce new DNA evidence in old cases.

SF 65 will require the state to maintain DNA evidence for several years and to give prisoners the opportunity to petition the court to consider DNA evidence that wasn't available during trial.

Officials who worked on the bill expect few applications for hearings on new DNA evidence, but said there may be a few.

The law becomes effective on July 1.

-- Senate File 19 will require the clean up of clandestine drug labs found on private property, and creates cleanup standards.

It also creates the clandestine laboratory remediation account with \$150,000 to reimburse law enforcement agencies that clean up drug labs. Property owners will also be able to apply for cleanup funds through the state attorney general's office, said Sen. Bob Fecht, R-Cheyenne, the sponsor of the legislation.

The state Department of Criminal Investigation was involved in between six and 15 drug lab busts in each of the last three years, according to documents that accompanied the legislation.

-- House Bill 17 enhances the duties of the Wyoming Community College Commission, including the power to terminate state funding for programs with consistently low enrollment.

-- House Bill 127 attempts to crack down on illegal prescription drug use by making it harder for addicts to "shop" for pills at more than one doctor.

-- House Bill 92 expands an existing property tax refund program for low-income homeowners.

-- Senate File 18 increases the penalties for filing false information about business entities with the secretary of state's office.

-- Senate File 26 gives state more tools to combat business fraud.

This morning, Freudenthal is scheduled to take action on a several more bills, including one that would increase fees at state parks and the so-called "castle doctrine" bill, which would shield people who use deadly force to protect their property from civil lawsuits.

Reach Star-Tribune capital bureau reporter Jared Miller at (307) 632-1244 or at M7jared.miller@trib.com.