

Landfill bill heads to House

By Gazette News Services

CHEYENNE - A bill up for discussion in the Wyoming House in the final week of this year's legislative session would exempt certain new landfills from being built with liners.

A plastic liner prevents pollution from seeping into groundwater. Senate File 135 would allow landfill seepage if no one is going to be affected by the pollution.

Only three of Wyoming's 51 operational landfills have liners, according to the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality.

Proponents say the bill would allow flexibility and potentially save money when communities need to build landfills. Sponsor Lorraine Quarberg, R-Thermopolis, said the bill provides another tool for the Department of Environmental Quality instead of taking a "one size fits all" approach.

She said municipalities also would be aided by the legislation - especially as 20-year garbage management plans are due to the state by July 1.

"We can sit and wait, or we can be proactive," Quarberg said.

Opponents say it's difficult to say years in advance how much pollution a landfill will cause and whether that pollution will need to be cleaned up.

"I'm against it, because it will allow contamination of groundwater," said Dennis Pino, Cheyenne's sanitation director.

That may require cleanup costs down the road.

"It always comes back to the taxpayer somewhere down the road," Pino said.