

Water Line bill heads to committee

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The Senate voted 29-1 to introduce a bill that would set aside nearly \$25 million in state funds toward construction of the Madison Pipeline to supply water to Gillette.

The measure will go before the Senate's Water, Agriculture and Public Land Committee on Thursday, said Sen. John Hines, R-Gillette, who sponsored the bill.

Mayor Duane Evenson and City Administrator Mike Muirhead will travel to Cheyenne to testify before the committee. Senator Hines sponsored a bill that would allocate approximately \$25 million for the next phase of the project, Muirhead said. Sen. Cale Case, R-Fremont, was the lone dissenting vote.

If the bill is approved in committee, it will head to the Senate floor sometime next week, Hines said. The bill, Senate File 36, now states that the money for the project would come from a water account, now typically used for projects like the construction of big dams.

Hines believes there may be some worry about which account the money will come from and how it will be replenished.

Like everything, the concern is about money, he said.

The huge Madison water project will build a 42-mile long pipeline connecting to the Madison aquifer near Pine Haven. It will deliver water to the growing city of Gillette and other communities in the region. Ten new wells also will be drilled at the Madison formation at 1,430 gallons minimum per well. The project will match the demand for water in Gillette's 30-year growth forecast.

Design for the project is estimated to be complete in the fall. It will determine how to serve the outlying areas of the regional project. After the design, one test well will be drilled and land will be purchased to build the pipeline.

The second phase of the Madison project will involve the internal workings of the pipeline, Muirhead said. Installation for sections of the new pipeline will begin throughout the city.

The city still is shooting for its original plan to try to secure \$200 million for the estimated \$226 million water project, he said. We'd like 67 percent in a grant form, Muirhead said. The remaining 33 percent of the cost is expected to be paid locally by a capital facility tax.

But with a slimmer budget this year, the city recognizes that it might not be a reality at this time.

We certainly understand the governor's and the Legislature's position, he said.

HEALTH FREEDOM OF CHOICE

Sen. John Hines, R-Gillette, introduced a resolution that would create a new section in the Wyoming Constitution to say that the federal government can't interfere with an individuals health care decisions.

It was shot down Tuesday morning on an 18-12 vote, just shy of the two-thirds majority.

Senate Joint Resolution 1 would have prohibited any sort of penalty, fine or tax because of a persons decision to participate or decline in health insurance. It also would have prohibited penalties toward a person who pays directly or receives payment directly for health care services.