By Russ Pankonin
The Imperial Republican

In just four weeks, 44th District Sen. Mark Christensen will return to Lincoln when the 101st Legislative session begins.

The body will convene for the 90-day session beginning Wednesday, Jan. 7, 2009. The session is scheduled to run through early June.

Christensen said he's looking forward to going back to Lincoln and representing the district.

Being the first year of the two-year session, new committee assignments and legislative leadership will be selected after the senators open the new session.

Committee decision to make

Christensen said he faces some tough decisions on his committee assignments for the next two years.

For the past two years, he has served as a member of the Natural Resources Committee.

Christensen introduced and ran the LB 701 water bill his first year on the committee.

Last year he joined Sen. Tom Carlson in getting a bill passed to pay surface water irrigators for water already purchased.

Both Christensen and Carlson serve on the Natural Resources Committee.

He wants to remain on the Natural Resources Committee because of his interest in water issues in his district and the Republican River Basin.

However, he's been approached by several leaders in the Legislature asking him to switch to the Judiciary Committee.

This committee will be a good vehicle for Christensen to promote other issues he campaigned on and is passionate about, such as pro-life issues and protection of gun rights.

So why not just serve on both committees? That would be the best solution, he said. But unfortunately, both committees meet at the same time so it's impossible for a senator to serve on both.

Christensen said it's also possible he may be appointed to the Legislature's Executive Committee. Christensen said this would be a key assignment because members of that committee determine which bills will be sent to which committees.

In some cases, the success or failure of a bill can be determined just because of an assignment to a particular committee.

Should Christensen decide to serve on the Judiciary Committee, he said he will continue to work on water issues for the district.

Being on the Natural Resources Committee, which helps direct water policy, allows a senator to have more impact on guiding legislation through committee to the floor, he said.

He said he already has some bills being drafted to address funding for compliance issues in the district and the state.