

Published May 27, 2011
Published Friday May 27, 2011

Fire union to governor: Keep out

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The Omaha fire union criticized Nebraska Gov. Dave Heineman on Thursday for questioning whether the city should move ahead with a new fire contract before a new law that overhauls the state labor court takes effect.

In a statement, union officials said it was wrong of the governor "to interject himself into a matter of local concern."

The Legislature gave final approval Wednesday to Legislative Bill 397, a measure designed to give public employers more control over labor costs. The changes to the Nebraska Commission of Industrial Relations take effect Oct. 1.

Earlier this week, Omaha Mayor Jim Suttle announced a tentative labor agreement with the fire union. He said the city would get a better deal now than if the agreement were delayed.

Heineman said if Suttle wanted the fire union contract pushed through the Omaha City Council before the CIR changes took effect, people should scrutinize what's in the contract.

In response, the union said the City Council would thoroughly review the contract.

"During that time, it is our hope that calmer, more thoughtful heads will prevail," the statement said. "The citizens of Omaha and the firefighters who serve them deserve nothing less."

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