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Omaha won't get help to rebuild sewers this year

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LINCOLN - A bill to help Omaha pay for the federally mandated reconstruction of its **sewer** system will have to wait until next year. State Sen. Heath Mello of Omaha said Tuesday that he plans to postpone consideration of Legislative Bill 682.

The measure would have redirected \$65 million in state and local sales taxes on local **sewer** rates to Omaha to help pay for the \$1.7 billion **sewer project**.

Mello said he lacked the 30 votes needed to overcome an expected veto by Gov. Dave Heineman. Mello said delaying the measure until 2012 would give him and other bill supporters more time to educate their fellow lawmakers.

The City of Omaha has been seeking financial help from the state and **federal** governments to offset steep increases in **sewer** rates to pay for the **project**.

Mello has argued that it was unfair for the state to claim the sales taxes paid on increased **sewer** rates paid by Omaha-area residents. That money, he has said, should be returned to Omaha help pay for the **sewer** reconstruction **project**.

A group of the largest manufacturers and **water** users in the city has said that **sewer**-rate increases might force them to downsize their Omaha operations or move.

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