

RGJ

June 3, 2009

More vetoes likely as Gibbons weighs last-minute bills

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Jim Gibbons

When lawmakers wrapped up their 120-day session early Tuesday, they were forced to leave scores of bills in the hands of a governor who has been more hostile to incoming legislation than any of his predecessors.

Gov. Jim Gibbons set a new veto record, far exceeding the one set by Nevada's first governor, and he's not done yet.

"I expect there will be more vetoes," said Josh Hicks, Gibbons' chief of staff. "I can't say how many, but there will be more."

Without the ability to call a special session, lawmakers are powerless to reverse any of the

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Vetoes/Gibbons' decisions final

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vetoes Gibbons makes in the next 10 days.

Gibbons and his staff are in the process of studying nearly 70 bills on his desk and expect to get more from the Legislature's last day. Hicks said the governor hopes to have made a decision on every bill by the end of the week.

Those decisions will be final, at least for two years. Lawmakers convene again in 2011.

While Gibbons hasn't been afraid to use his veto stamp, lawmakers also have been protective about their legislation.

Lawmakers overrode 25 of the 41 vetoes, sustained 12 and failed to take full votes on four, passively allowing the veto to stand.

Most importantly, lawmakers overrode Gibbons' veto of their \$6.6 billion budget and the \$781 million tax package to fund it.

Senate Majority Leader Steven Horsford, D-North Las Vegas, said lawmakers succeeded in getting their most important legislation to the governor early.

"We tried very hard to get all of the mission-critical bills in time for us to be able to do an override if necessary," he said. "I don't think anything went over (late) that meets

POSSIBLE VETOES

A preview of key measures that Gov. Jim Gibbons might veto:

FLOOD CONTROL: Senate Bill 175 is a measure critical for Washoe County's flood control efforts to expand the authority of a regional body to manage, raise fees and sell bonds for flood control projects.

TAX STUDY: SB 143 includes a \$500,000 appropriation for an interim study on the state's tax structure sponsored by Senate Minority Leader Bill Raggio, R-Reno, and Senate Majority Leader Steven Horsford, D-North Las Vegas.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING: Assembly Bill 395 is a top priority for government employee unions that would provide for non-economic collective bargaining for state workers.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS: SBI 564 provides money for capital improvement projects for 2009-11.

STALKING, SMOKING: AB 309 changes laws related to criminal stalking that was amended to allow indoor smoking at tobacco conventions.

that threshold."

While nearly all of the budget bills and key reform bills

made it to Gibbons by May 23, a number of measures important either to the leadership or individual lawmakers missed the deadline.

Notably, Horsford's signature green jobs bill wasn't sent until May 29. Horsford said that measure was discussed as part of the "broader renewable energy" efforts negotiated by legislative leaders and Gibbons' staff.

"I expect it to be approved," Horsford said.

Hicks wouldn't confirm the measure is safe.

"We'll be looking at that one," Hicks said.

Hicks said little about Gibbons' plans for pending measures. He wouldn't confirm whether Gibbons would sign a bill necessary for Washoe County's flood control efforts or a separate measure funding an interim study of the state's financial structure that was part of Senate Minority Leader Bill Raggio's legislative agenda.

Bills that appear to be safe, however, include Senate Bill 427, which includes a package of reforms to public employee health and retirement benefits and another measure that funds the state's capital improvement projects over the next two years.