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## Legislator plans to revive measure that would change binding arbitration

House Republicans need to rally around the measure for it to pass, lawmaker tells northwest Oklahoma City chamber of commerce.

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A legislator said Thursday he will continue to seek passage of legislation that would change how work contract disputes are settled between cities and labor unions.

Sen. David Holt, R-Oklahoma City, told members of the Northwest Chamber he plans to revive Senate Bill 826, which passed the Senate this year but failed to win approval in the House of Representatives. The upcoming session, which starts in February, is the second session of the 53rd Legislature so bills still considered alive may be taken up next year.

“We are trying to tackle that,” said Holt, one of several lawmakers from the northwest metro area to speak to the group.

Holt asked chamber members to encourage lawmakers “to stand up for local control of tax dollars” and vote for his measure.

“We have sort of a logjam at the Capitol of people who are not clearly understanding this issue as well as they ought to so it might be a multiyear project,” Holt said.

### Rallying support

Rep. David Dank, R-Oklahoma City, said House Republicans are needed to get behind the measure if the proposal has a chance to pass.

Holt said the bill was not brought up for a vote on the House floor because not enough of the 70 GOP House members would provide the 51 votes it needed for passage. The 31 Democrats were expected to vote against it.

“I can't believe that in the first time in history that we have a Republican House and a Republican Senate and a Republican governor and we were not able to do something

about a situation that's bankrupting many of our cities in this state," Dank said. "Hopefully we'll be able to put enough pressure on enough of our Republican colleagues by the way to pass that sort of legislation and put a halt to it."

SB 826 by Holt, elected to the Senate in 2010, originally would have eliminated the collective bargaining process called binding arbitration that occurs when contract negotiations fail between a local government and police or firefighter labor union.

When that happens, each side's best offers are sent to a panel of three arbitrators who choose the winning offer. The city and union each choose an arbitrator. The third, deciding arbitrator is agreed on by both sides and is often a mediator from out of state.

Holt toned down the bill so that it now basically would give preference to arbitrators from Oklahoma and change the criteria arbitrators use when considering contract offers.

"Republicans in the House just needed more time to understand how undemocratic this system is and the effect that it's having on local government," he said. "It takes years when a new issue comes along for the Legislature to fully grasp it and understand what has to be done."

## Pensions under review

Rep. Randy McDaniel, named this week chairman of the House oversight committee on pensions, said the panel will hear four interim studies on pensions this year.

They will look at how pension system investments have been handled, ways to continue reducing the unfunded liability and pension funding formulas.

McDaniel, R-Oklahoma City, said additional pension reforms are necessary.

"I want to continue to reduce the unfunded liability," he said. "The unfunded liability is still a significant issue."

At the start of this year's session, Oklahoma's seven retirement systems had more than a \$16 billion unfunded liability; they had a \$6 billion unfunded liability 10 years ago.

As of March, Oklahoma's 57 percent pension funding ratio was the third-worst in the nation.

Legislation approved this year is expected to produce savings of nearly \$7 billion over the next 30 years, McDaniel said.

One measure, House Bill 2132, should reduce unfunded liability in state pensions by \$5 billion within the year.



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