

Tahoe bill passes Nevada Legislature

By Andrew Doughman and Conor Shine, Las Vegas Sun

Legislators slogged through dozens of bills Friday, turning the Senate and Assembly chambers into arenas for legislative triumph and death.

Following a lengthy day of voting, bills you might find good, bad or just plain weird are headed to Republican Gov. Brian Sandoval, meaning they now need nothing more than a signature from Sandoval to become law.

But just as many bills died because they didn't pass by a legislative deadline that ended midnight Friday, perhaps none as spectacularly as a sex education bill from Assemblyman David Bobzien, D-Reno.

"You only have 120 days to do business with deadlines," Bobzien said. "Bills die. That's the way it is."

Senate Democrats declined to consider the bill that Assembly Democrats had passed on a party-line vote, highlighting the inter-party fighting that can happen when senators need the Assembly to pass its bills and Assembly members need the Senate to pass its bills.

To achieve their goals, legislators swapped and traded in a this-for-that spate of paper-making frenzy resulting in dozens of last-minute amendments.

"We've done more alterations here than Joan Rivers' plastic surgeon," said Assemblyman William Horne, D-Las Vegas, in a tweet.

Legislators have for the past few months nurtured their bills through the legislative process, fending off opponents,

compromising with interested parties, and gathering the legislative voting blocs necessary to pass their bills. In short, they get personally invested in the legislative process.

And while legislators can rise to the occasion to debate important state social and fiscal policy, they also can spend evenings in closed meetings debating the merits and demerits of a bill about raw milk.

"It's surreal, but I think particularly for those of us who have been here a couple of sessions, you get used to it," Bobzien said.

While past sessions' deadline votes have run out the clock in lengthy and contentious arguments among legislators, the 2013 Legislature ended the day at 10pm with laughter in the Senate and congenial well wishes for a senator's birthday.

Friday's deadline is somewhat meaningless; big pieces of legislation including a major energy overhaul, a gun background check bill, a bill allowing for medical marijuana dispensaries, a gas tax, a Southern Nevada stadium study bill, and other bills are exempt from the deadline.

But that doesn't mean major bills didn't pass Friday either.

Here's a look at some of the big bills the Legislature approved or killed Friday:

A bill to permit an increase in the sales tax to allow Las Vegas Metro Police to retain 300 officers has passed the Senate, 18-3. Assembly Bill 496 would increase the sales tax in Clark County by 0.15 percent if it is approved by a two-thirds vote of the Clark County Commission.

A controversial bill that would have updated and standardized sex education curriculum across the state won't advance any further after it died in the Senate Friday.

Supporters framed the bill as a common sense update to the state's sex education policy, but it became mired in heated rhetoric about what exactly would be changed.

Critics had earlier warned that the bill would serve to push the agenda of Planned Parenthood, especially in regards to abortion, and would disconnect sex education from morality and community concerns.

Legislators paved the way for a renewed agreement with California to protect the environment around Lake Tahoe.

Senate Bill 229 passed in the Assembly on a 40-1 vote and now heads to the governor's desk.

Earlier this month, Sandoval and California Gov. Jerry Brown announced they'd reached a deal to keep the two states in a decades-old compact to protect the environment around Lake Tahoe, agreeing to ease some barriers for development and mollifying the concerns of some environmentalists.

The agreement comes two years after the Nevada Legislature passed a law requiring the Silver State to break the compact if substantial changes weren't made by both the compact and the regional plan governing how the sensitive environment is developed. Environmentalists launched an effort this year to repeal the 2011 law, succeeding in convincing the Nevada Senate to pass Senate Bill 229 to keep Nevada in the compact.

Assemblyman Jason Frierson, D-Las Vegas, brokered a compromise to a major homeowners' association bill that passed Friday out of the Assembly.

The omnibus HOA bill, Senate Bill 280, passed in a 35-6 vote.