



# Forum editorial: Diversion study bill is foolish

Posted on Jan 28, 2015 at 11:28 p.m.

**L**egislation calling for yet another expensive study of the Fargo-Moorhead diversion – and whether a diversion is needed – should be defeated. It would be a waste of money. It would be a faux feel-good exercise that would unearth no new information. It would be the worst sort of political pandering by legislators who apparently haven't got the courage to tell the truth to constituents whose undisguised aim is to kill the flood protection project at any cost.

And that means any cost to taxpayers. No matter what the bill's sponsors say about saving money by not doing a duplicative study, a new study would cost a bundle, and would be duplicative. The data gathered by a new study would merely be a compilation of work that has already been done by several state and federal agencies, regional water management districts and contracted private engineering companies.

A little honesty, please, would be nice. Sen. Larry Luick, R-Fairmount, is lead on the bill, which has other sponsors. The senator represents part of the area where landowners and others have been trying to kill the diversion. He justifies his legislation by contending there is a lack of independent information about the project. That's a lot of hooley.

If ever a project has been studied thoroughly, it's the diversion. Not only have the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and other federal agencies studied and approved the project but a preliminary report by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources concluded the surface retention aspect project opponents

have been touting can't work. The DNR has not been friendly to the project, so its retention report is more than credible.

What Luick and others seem to want is a manipulated study that will find what they want to find, whether it's there or not. Such work would be akin to the way tobacco companies conducted health-effects studies of smoking.

Finally, among the sponsors of the foolish and potentially expensive bill are Sen. Gary Lee, R-Casselton, and Rep. Wesley Belter, R-Fargo, who represent the rural/suburban district adjacent to Fargo and West Fargo. A portion of the diversion channel would be constructed in their district. Both legislators seem ready to put at risk permanent flood protection for Fargo, Moorhead and the metro's environs. Unlike legislators upstream from the project, Lee and Belter should know better. Indeed, what seems to be their tendency to oppose the diversion is enough to question their fitness for re-election.

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