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(Neb.)-Heineman Does Not Agree With Prohibition In Whiteclay



By: Chris Fankhauser Posted at: 07/08/2013 01:44 PM

(Chadron)-Over the past few years, two sides have been at odds regarding alcohol sales in Whiteclay, the small Nebraska town that borders South Dakota and the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, where alcohol is banned.

Recently, things have become more hostile, with alcohol delivery vehicles being attacked and vandalized, and even some of the drivers threatened, by those who wish to stop alcohol sales in the tiny border town. The issue has been brought to the attention of lawmakers in Lincoln, most recently by Tribal President Bryan Brewer. Brewer was in Lincoln on Monday pleading his case to Nebraska Governor Dave Heineman.

Brewer asked Heineman to step in and help keep alcohol from being sold in Whiteclay, because much of that goes across the border to the dry reservation, where alcoholism and poverty run rampant. Heineman is not unsympathetic, but as he addressed in his monthly call-in show on Monday afternoon, he doesn't believe it is a problem the State of Nebraska needs to address.

Heineman stated one of the keys to resolving the issue is addressing the issue on the reservation with programs and education to help those on the reservation overcome the problem of alcoholism. He believes that President Brewer should lead the campaign, and that it is not a Nebraska problem, but rather a South Dakota problem.

Heineman said what Brewer suggested is something that although Tribal officials may see as an answer, is unfair to those businesses in Whiteclay, and again is not a problem the State of Nebraska should become involved with. He believes there are other ways to handle the problem of alcohol on the reservation.

What Brewer and many of his supporters are suggesting is prohibiting alcohol sales in Whiteclay. However, Heineman does not believe that is the answer, nor is that fair to the businesses. Prohibition is not legal in Nebraska, and as long as the businesses in Whiteclay are not breaking any laws, they should be allowed to conduct business there. He again stated this is not a Nebraska problem, but a South Dakota issue.

The Tribe has also considered allowing alcohol sales on the Reservation to take advantage of the extra income from taxes from those sales. They approved a resolution to let voters decide how to handle the possibility of sales. Other media outlets are reporting that Brewer walked out of the meeting after only three minutes, even though Heineman had scheduled an hour for the discussion. According to those in attendance, when Heineman told Brewer problems on the Reservation could be best tackled on the Reservation, Brewer walked out, and later said that Heineman did not want to cooperate.

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