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Fight Over Improving Ethics Bill Kills It

To no one's great surprise, the financial disclosure bill for legislators died in an argument over how strong it should be.

The House insisted on including local officials in the bill; the Senate insisted on keeping them out. Members of both houses have record votes for HB 730 by Rep. Michael Jackson, while no one has their fingerprints on its demise, because it never came up for a final vote.

"The only reason locals were ever put in this bill was in an effort to kill it," said Sen. Robert Adley, D-Benton. The bill started out applying only to legislators before both house began improving it.

Baton Rouge Chamber of Commerce president Stephen Moret, watching the minutes tick away toward adjournment with no movement on the bill, said he always expected it to be a two-year effort. "It's teed up perfectly for next year," he said, with his group and others in the broad coalition targeting it as a campaign issue.