# **Resolution creating committee to investigate AltEn won't get a hearing this year**

[Chris Dunker](https://journalstar.com/users/profile/ChrisDunker)  Lincoln Journal Star, May 25, 2021

The Legislature’s plan to end its 90-day session six days early Thursday means there won’t be enough time for lawmakers to consider creating a special committee to investigate AltEn.

Sen. Dan Hughes of Venango, chair of the Executive Board, said there wasn’t enough time left in the session to schedule a hearing for Sen. Carol Blood's resolution (LR159).

The Bellevue senator last week sponsored a measure calling on the Legislature to create a special investigatory committee to look at AltEn’s compliance with state environmental regulations.

The facility near Mead, which used seed corn coated with pesticide to make ethanol, was sued by the state earlier this year for more than a dozen violations of rules governing disposal of solid and liquid waste stretching back years.

The resolution proposed creating a nine-member committee that would have also studied how treated seed is both used and disposed of in Nebraska, with a preliminary report due to the Legislature by Dec. 1.

A final report, including findings and recommendations, would have been due by Dec. 1, 2022, before the committee was dissolved.

“Unfortunately, the timing of Sen. Blood dropping that LR did not give us enough time to provide for an adequate hearing,” Hughes said in a phone interview Tuesday afternoon.

After being introduced, LR159 went to the Legislature’s Referencing Committee, which assigns it to a committee based upon subject matter, and was referenced to the Executive Board.

Bills and resolutions have a seven-day notice before a hearing, under the Legislature’s rules, meaning the only time that would have been available for the Executive Board to hold a hearing would have been between 8-9 a.m. Thursday.

No hearings can be scheduled after the Legislature adjourns sine die, which it plans to do Thursday, according to the schedule set by Speaker Mike Hilgers.

Blood said she was willing to meet any criteria set in order to have the resolution heard this year, but was told it wasn't possible with the time left.

Hughes, who also sits on the Natural Resources Committee, which advanced a bill (LB507) introduced in response to AltEn, said he is very concerned about the issue and understands the frustration felt by those living near the now-idle ethanol plant.

“I did not feel an hour was sufficient time to give the people of Mead and Saunders County the attention they deserve on this issue, and I certainly didn’t want to cut them short,” Hughes said.

Saunders County Attorney Joe Dobesh expressed disappointment the resolution wasn't scheduled for a hearing, and blasted Hughes at a meeting of the county Board of Supervisors on Tuesday.

“He failed to take the initiative, he failed this town, he failed the state,” Dobesh said. “We will not have those answers now.”

Although it won’t get a hearing this year, LR159 will remain on the agenda and be taken up by the Executive Board in the next session, slated to begin in January.

In the meantime, Blood said she plans to put together a "roadshow" of sorts this summer, featuring experts in environmental issues, science and agriculture at forums across the state to discuss "what can be done and how they can help us help Mead and other communities."

While AltEn will be the focus, Blood said the forums would also focus on other water quality across Nebraska.

"We're not doing a very effective job of addressing those issues," she said. "Let's have an informed Nebraska."