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Rotunda rules

On Valentine’s Day, there was a rally in the Capitol rotunda called “Stop the AltEn Coverup.” The AltEn ethanol plant used pesticide treated seeds to produce ethanol resulting in tons and tons of contaminated byproducts that have been polluting and continue to pollute the ethanol plant site and the surrounding area. LR159 will have a hearing on Feb. 24. This resolution, if passed, will appoint a special investigative and oversight committee on the AltEn crisis. This committee will investigate how, why and when things went wrong at AltEn and how weak the regulatory response was and why the problem persists. This committee would create an open process for finding solutions to this unprecedented and unique to Nebraska problem.

Before the rally, organizers were told that we could bring signs no larger than 11- by 17-inches. Having observed photos of another recent event in the rotunda that had a huge backdrop, I decided to create a banner for our backdrop to see what would happen. Sure enough, I was told that banners were not allowed. I quickly produced a photo of Gov. Pete Ricketts in the rotunda endorsing Mike Flood featuring a huge backdrop (called a step and repeat) with “Mike Flood, U.S. Congress” plastered all over the banner. I was then permitted to display my banner and an easel was provided to hold it. When I previously saw that the rotunda was being used to endorse a political candidate, as inappropriate as I thought that was, I endeavored to see how the rules were applied. The same rules should apply to everyone. At any rate, I’m glad that we could display our banner at the “Stop the AltEn Coverup” rally, but it raised another issue that needs a remedy — what should the rules be for signage in the rotunda and how can it be assured that the rules are fairly enforced?

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