

Bill helps get AltEn answers

As a resident of Saunders County, I want answers. The AltEn ethanol plant disaster may be located south of Mead but the village and its people aren't the only ones impacted by the crisis.

The scope of the disaster is much wider, and likely long-lasting. It is imperative that we quickly understand of how far chemical residues have spread and the statewide impact on agricultural operations and watersheds.

First we have to admit that this disaster is too big for just the Nebraska Department of Environment and Energy to manage. It will require state and federal agencies working in tandem to assemble the scientific expertise and resources needed.

LR159 would establish a special unicameral committee that can, among other things, examine why the state approved AltEn's use of pesticide-treated seed without public comment and why NDEE Director Jim Macy has refused to participate in open meetings on the subject. Macy has participated only in private meetings, excluding the public, the scientific community and media. It will also uncover why dozens of public complaints were not acted upon with any meaning. And it can determine the wisdom of piling 99,000 tons of poisoned wet cake and sludge into a 16-acre mountain with no liner and capping it with a mortar likely to crack in the heat and humidity and belch toxic, explosive gases.

A special committee could explore why the Interim Remedial Action Plan, developed by the companies that supplied the chemically treated seed, is being completed without a public hearing.

During the Feb. 24 Executive Committee hearing on LR159 Macy testified in opposition. It is difficult to understand why a state agency would oppose a special committee. If, as Macy attests, NDEE has done its job, what is there to hide from a special committee?

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