

Free essay on letter to the editor the mercury

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Dear Editor:

If you saw a small child in ruffled swimsuit with fully inflated blue and flowered float tube encircling her waist about to jump into the sewage water storage tank for an afternoon of swimming fun, you would certainly stop her, wouldn't you? For the same reason, it is ridiculous for us to simply turn our heads away from efforts to permit unregulated 'clean' coal operations in our county.

One of the party objectives of the Riley County Republicans is to encourage so-called clean coal as part of the state's energy plan in addition to nuclear, wind and geothermal. The problem with this idea is that the idea of clean coal is little more than an advertising slogan referring to the reality that it is a cleaner process than the old forms of burning coal. However, there is nothing clean about it.

Burning any type of coal will always release carbon dioxide (CO₂) into the atmosphere. CO₂ is considered one of the highest contributors to global climate change and anything we do to reduce the levels of CO₂ in the atmosphere will help counteract the effects of a warming planet. Other harmful and contributory gasses emitted in the process can include sulphur dioxide and nitrogen dioxide. However, I am not trying to argue climate change here.

In higher concentrations, these chemicals have also been proven to increase cancer risk in populations living in and around the area where coal is burned. They are invisible to the human eye, so it is impossible to tell when the concentrations begin to reach dangerous levels - not at all like the clear water of the swimming pool becoming murky with sewage.

Clean coal technology is technology developed to filter these chemicals out of the emissions and, in some cases, condense it into a liquid form which is finally pumped deep into the ground in a process called carbon capture and sequestration. While there is some evidence that this can help the situation, it does not capture all of the harmful chemicals, it has not yet been proven safe, and even the best systems are only effective when employed. Because of the high expense of 'clean coal', many companies have been caught not fully utilizing the program as proven by our own Westar Energy plant.

As human beings working toward a bright future for our children and as a mostly agricultural state, it is in our best interests to keep our air clean.

Rather than fighting for more 'clean coal' plants or fewer restrictions and oversights on the plants we already have, we should be working to further support and expand our 'green' energy options.

Although our county does not have the same strong wind patterns as other areas of the state, Kansas as a whole is third in the nation for potential wind power production. Geothermal energy production has been on the rise since 2008 and solar energy production is capable of yielding a high level of energy with very low environmental impact.

Even if clean coal technology is capable of scrubbing its emissions to deliver completely clean oxygen coming out of the stacks, we can't trust the plants to adhere to even lesser standards than this.

As responsible citizens and good caretakers of our children, we need to reject efforts to expand clean coal in Kansas and force existing plants to adhere to current standards at the same time that we encourage development in alternative technologies.

Sincerely,