

Effects of waste dump argued by both sides

By Mick Haller
Senior Reporter

After a Lincoln meeting to organize the Nuclear Right to Vote Initiative Friday, representatives from both sides accused each other of spreading false information.

Sam Welsch, executive director of Nebraskans for the Right to Vote, is circulating a petition that asks for Nebraska to withdraw from the waste compact. The compact includes Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, Louisiana and Arkansas and demands statewide and local voting approval to have any waste site located in the state.

Welsch said the cost of withdrawing from the Central Interstate Low-Level Radioactive Waste Compact has been exaggerated by proponents of the compact.

Welsch said Nebraska can withdraw from the compact and avoid the financial penalties by paying membership dues for five years. Assuming Nebraska's membership is not revoked, he said, Nebraska would pay only \$25,000 a year, or a total of \$125,000.

The largest projected penalty,

Welsch said, would be \$1.5 million.

Currently, commercial low-level waste is going to three sites around the nation: Barnwell, S.C.; Bada, Nev.; and Hanford, Wash.

Welsch said the change to 12 or 13 compact regions building their own sites was a political result. He said the plan was not well implemented and should have resulted in only four or five new waste sites.

The change to interstate compacts has resulted in an increase in the number of areas that could be contaminated by nuclear waste.

Larry Grimm, radiation safety officer at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, questioned whether that was the effect of the petition.

Grimm said that, according to an attorney he had talked with, the petition would require a low-level site to be built at the two nuclear power plants at the University of Nebraska Medical Center and at UNL.

Welsch said U.S. Ecology's plans for the nuclear waste site may seem wonderful, but in the contract, still unsigned, U.S. Ecology has a clause that allows it to modify its plans.

"If we go along with U.S. Ecology, I'm sure we're going to be vic-

tims of bait and switch," Welsch said.

Welsch announced the end of the meeting for non-petitioners and said the intent of this meeting was not to debate.

He said he'd be interested in such a debate, but he didn't have time to organize one.

After the meeting, Grimm rebutted several of Welsch's statements. "He's spread such disinformation," Grimm said.

When the proposal for a nuclear waste site first came up, the opponents of the site asked for an above-ground site with bunkers and other safety features, Grimm said.

When U.S. Ecology came up with a new plan, they changed their tune, Grimm said.

"What they (U.S. Ecology) are offering is truly, truly a Cadillac in disposal," Grimm said.

Grimm said he opposed a state-wide vote to approve the site.

"I vote for a fact that the public doesn't understand the issue very well," he said, but once the public has been educated, the vote would be OK.

"Once they come to the realization that it won't kill them, they

won't care," he said.

Grimm said he opposes the initiative "because I think it's unsafe."

He said even the best scenario presented by the initiative offers no extra safety, but could mean "a hell of a lot more money."

In the worst scenario, it could be

less safe, Grimm said. Storage on the site of the nuclear power plants would mean the waste would be on a flood plain, increasing the chance that waste would come in contact with water, Grimm said.

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Stassen confident about race

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He also ran for mayor of Philadelphia in 1962, senator for Minnesota in 1978 and governor of Minnesota again in 1982.

Stassen was elected to his first office, county attorney, at age 23. He was elected governor of Minnesota at 31 and served three terms.

In 1956, Stassen started a "dump Nixon" movement. Stassen said he always knew Richard Nixon would not be a good candidate because of

his experience working with him when he was vice president under Eisenhower.

Stassen said he sometimes gets ridiculed for running "so many times, but that's 'par for the course.'"

Stassen said he did not know if he would run for president again in 1992.

"I'm just concentrating now on 1988," he said.

He said he is confident about this year's election. Stassen cited a poll in

Iowa in which more than half the respondents wished there was an-

"I'm just concentrating now on 1988"

—Stassen

other candidate other than the 13 candidates originally running. "Everyone has a chance," Stassen said.

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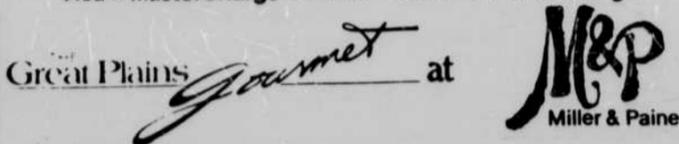
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