How can we best protect against contaminants?

Contaminants in our soil and water can have significant dangerous impacts on our environment and our overall health. Recently in the United States, it seems like issues of contaminants in the soil and water most impact those who are already struggling to make ends meet. Our question to deliberate today is how to counter effects and prevent future incidents.

OPTION ONE:
Enact harsher regulations and penalties for those who do not protect the public.

This option suggests that companies and governments do not always respond ethically to issues of contaminants in the soil. Harsher regulations and penalties may decrease future incidents.

<u>Possible Actions to take in this approach:</u>

☑ Pass state and federal laws

☑ Impose mandatory minimum penalties for government officials who are found guilty of ignoring or misleading the public about a problem.

☑ Pass state and federal laws

<u>Possible Drawbacks to this approach:</u>

⇓ There are already some laws in place and incidents have continued to impact communities.

⇓ Penalties after the fact do not always address the harms inflicted on communities; for example, sometimes companies are already bankrupt or closed and cannot financially assist communities

OPTION TWO:
Fund training, testing, and education programs.

This option assumes that contaminants will continue to cause problems for U.S. communities, and places a funding priority on prevention, testing, and education programs.

<u>Possible Actions to take in this approach:</u>

☑ Implement better training programs for government officials

☑ Fund research to learn how to efficiently and proactively test soil and water quality

☑ Conduct public education programs

<u>Possible Drawbacks to this approach:</u>

⇓ Even with strong proactive prevention, it would be challenging to be involved in every single potential case in the United States

⇓ Research and training can be expensive

⇓ The public may not feel a need to attend programming until after the fact; even then, this places a burden on those impacted and suffering effects

OPTION THREE:
Invest in our society to address and prevent incidents.

This option assumes contaminants can be reduced or prevented, and places a priority on developing better infrastructure and training others to respond quickly and ethically to incidents.

<u>Possible Actions to take in this approach:</u>

☑ [illegible] those already impacted, both now and with future health issues

☑ Develop and implement rapid response mechanisms, learning from failures in recent cases

☑ Begin to replace at-risk infrastructure

<u>Possible Drawbacks to this approach:</u>

⇓ Infrastructure projects can be very expensive, and not <u>all</u> old pipes result in contaminants

⇓ Contaminants sometimes come from private businesses, and it is sometimes hard to predict when a problem can occur

What should be done? And who should take actions?

Developed by Sara Drury & Laura Wysocki, 2017