

ONE HUNDRED FOURTEENTH CONGRESS
Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE

2125 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6115

Majority (202) 225-2927
Minority (202) 225-3641

January 15, 2016

The Honorable Gina McCarthy
Administrator
US Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Administrator McCarthy:

We are extremely concerned about the drinking water crisis in Flint, Michigan.

Over the last several months, this issue has received significant public attention. According to press reports, residents began complaining that their drinking water looked dirty, tasted bad, and was causing rashes after the city switched from water provided by the Detroit water system to water treated by Flint and sourced from the Flint River in April 2014 to save money.¹ The media have also reported that the people of Flint have consistently faced the reality of tap water that exceeded maximum allowable contamination levels of e.g., e. coli, other biological pathogens, and chemical toxicants such as trihalomethanes. The reports suggest these contaminants could cause liver, kidney or central nervous system problems, and an increased risk of cancer.”² These accounts also detail studies which separately show that the proportion of Flint area “infants and children with above-average levels of lead in their blood has nearly doubled since the city switched in 2014 from purchasing Detroit’s treated water to treating water drawn from the Flint River .”³

¹ *Flint Wants Safe Water, and Someone to Answer for Its Crisis*, New York Times (Jan. 9, 2016).

² *City warns of potential health risks after Flint water tests revealed too much disinfection byproduct*, MLive (January 17, 2015).

³ *In Flint, Mich., there’s so much lead in children’s blood that a state of emergency is declared*, Washington Post (December 15, 2015).


Although the city has now reverted to using treated water from Detroit, according to news reports, testing still reveals elevated lead levels in Flint's water due to corrosion damage in the pipes.⁴ We understand, on December 15, 2015, Flint Mayor Karen Weaver declared a state of emergency for the City of Flint, declaring the situation "a manmade disaster" that caused "irreversible" damage to children.⁵ We are also aware that, on January 5 of this year, Michigan Governor Rick Snyder declared a state of emergency for the Flint area and surrounding county, authorizing the Michigan State Police to coordinate the state's efforts, including requests for assistance from the federal government.⁶

It is our understanding that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has established a Safe Drinking Water Task Force to provide assistance to Flint and has announced plans to audit Michigan's Drinking Water Program.⁷ We urgently request a briefing on these matters and on EPA's anticipated role as the situation in Flint continues to unfold. We ask that you provide this briefing by January 22, 2016. Please contact Dave McCarthy with the Committee Majority staff at (202) 225-2927 and Rick Kessler with the Committee Democratic staff at (202) 225-3641 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



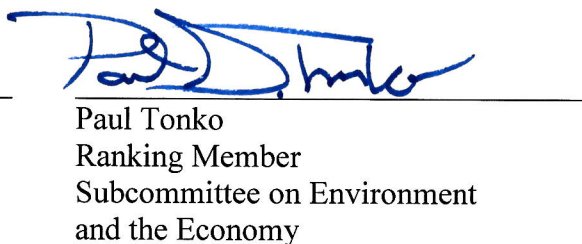
Fred Upton
Chairman



Frank Pallone
Ranking Member



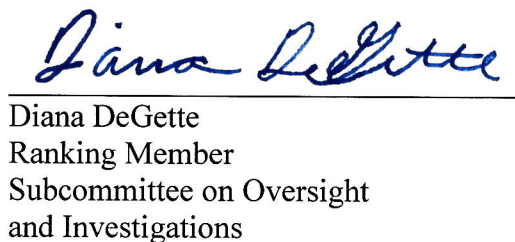
John Shimkus
Chairman
Subcommittee on Environment
and the Economy



Paul Tonko
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Environment
and the Economy



Tim Murphy
Chairman
Subcommittee on Oversight
and Investigations




Diana DeGette
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Oversight
and Investigations

⁴ *How tap water became toxic in Flint, Michigan*, CNN (Jan. 11, 2016).

⁵ *Flint, Michigan, Declares State of Emergency Amid Lead in Drinking Water Scare*, NBC News (Dec. 15, 2015).

⁶ *Governor declares state of emergency over lead in Flint water*, MLive (Jan. 5, 2016).

⁷ Environmental Protection Agency, *Flint Drinking Water Documents* (accessed Jan. 12, 2015) (online at www.epa.gov/mi/flint-drinking-water-documents).



Joseph R. Pitts
Chairman
Subcommittee on Health



Gene Green
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Health