

House Democrats Urge Reauthorization of Safe Drinking Water Act:

The top Democrats on the House drinking water committee wrote the Chairman last week pressing for hearings *"to explore the need for amendments to this landmark public health law, which has not been updated in twenty years... We cannot afford to ignore the problem any longer. We urge you to hold hearings and bring comprehensive legislation before the Subcommittee and then the full Committee to address this national crisis."* The letter says the hearings *"should explore EPA's ability to set healthy protective drinking water standards under the 1996 amendments, measures to address lead exposure in communities and schools, drinking water facility security, the need to repair and replace deteriorating drinking water infrastructure, and the use of Safe Drinking Water Revolving Loan Funds [SRFs]."* The letter cites the recent rural drinking water law, *The Small and Rural Community Water Assistance Act*, as an example of successful collaboration ([letter](#)).

The Limits of Water Utility Consolidation: After Hurricane Katrina, Mississippi used over \$600 million in federal funding to create a regional utility to promote consolidation of utility systems and increase efficiency in services. A state sponsored review committee has found that the utility may be overbuilt, finding that *"infrastructure is being built to accommodate significant future growth that might not materialize... resulting in increased per-customer cost for infrastructure maintenance."* The state review panel received complaints regarding wasteful spending, lack of transparency in making project/spending decisions, and conflicts of interest. According to the review committee, supporters of the new regional utility district argued it was needed because after a storm, *"smaller communities and their utility providers may be unable to recover quickly because they lack the resources and because smaller utility systems might be poorly maintained and might not be adequate to meet the needs of the service area"* ([review committee's report](#)). We have heard recent reports that small water utilities are resisting combining with the new utility because, even with the millions of dollars in federal subsidies, the size of the utility makes the water service too expensive.

Tempers Flare at Contentious July 6 EPA House of Representatives Hearing ([video](#)).

EPA Chief Says All 50 States Following Lead Drinking Water Rule: All 50 states told the Environmental Protection Agency they're in line with federal standards for implementing the Lead and Copper Rule for drinking water in the wake of the crisis in Flint. In a letter to state regulators Thursday, EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy said the agency received responses from all 50 states stating that their protocols and procedures for finding lead and copper in drinking water were consistent with EPA guidance. McCarthy initially asked for a review in late February ([state responses](#)). A number of states wrote of the challenges they face in trying to boost the availability of public information “because of limited information technology resources and/or concerns with privacy and security.” Also last week, EPA sent a letter to states in response to their reports ([EPA letter](#)).

Lawmakers Tested After Lead Found in US Capitol Office Water Fountains: Last week, Congress provided blood lead level testing to House Members and staff after lead levels were found to be “*slightly above the [Environmental Protection Agency] standard*” in drinking water in one of the House office buildings ([more](#)).

Good News Reported in Kentucky, Tennessee, Nevada and Massachusetts:

- **Report: Kentucky’s Drinking Water Continues Excellence in Quality** ([more](#)).
- **City of Memphis and the Consolidated Public Water Supply District #1's (TN) 2016 Compliance Reports Reveal Zero Violations** ([more](#)).
- **Truckee Meadows Water Authority (NV) Continues to Provide High-quality Drinking Water in 2016 EPA Report** ([more](#)).
- **Braintree (MA) Meets or Surpasses All Federal and State Drinking Water Standards According to Water Quality:** “Drinking water provided by the department is of the highest quality,” declares the overview of the six-page report. “We’re proud to share our results with you” ([more](#)).

Local Board of Aldermen in Tennessee May Have to Rebid Work to Replace Water Meters after Dispute Between City Engineer and Construction Company: Mayor says, *“I just want to do what is in the best interest of the citizens of Erin”* ([more](#)).

Jury Awards \$5.1 Million in Compensatory Damages Against DuPont for Perfluorooctanoic Acid (PFOA) Release: The verdict found in favor of plaintiff David Freeman who alleged the company's releases of PFOA at its Washington Works Plant in Parkersburg, WV polluted his drinking water and, as a result, caused him to suffer from testicular cancer and other injuries ([more](#)).

Federal Court Allows Flint SDWA Citizen Suit to Move Forward: A U.S. district court determined in a July 7 ruling that it has the authority and is the appropriate venue to review environmentalists' Safe Drinking Water Act claims against the city and state and denied the defendants' call to dismiss the suit. The environmentalists, including the Natural Resources Defense Council, are asking for the defendants, including the Michigan treasurer, the members of the Flint Receivership Transition Advisory Board, the city of Flint and its city administrator, to replace all lead service lines in the community at no cost to residents ([ruling](#)).

National Rural Water Association

Contact: Mike Keegan, Policy Analyst <keegan@ruralwater.org>
(Washington, DC)