



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

MICHIGAN

EDUCATING AND ADVOCATING FOR RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT

May 13, 2016

Dear Governor Snyder, Commissioner Curtis, and Mayor Weaver:

The League of Women Voters of Michigan and the LWV of the Flint Area appreciate the ongoing attention to the needs of the citizens of Flint in response to the water crisis, in particular services to children. We do, however, have ongoing significant concerns, namely the communication of what is occurring and how to access the plan of action that is being employed to improve the current and future situation.

The implementation of the Flint Water Interagency Coordinating Committee (FWICC) has broad-based political, bureaucratic and subject matter expertise. Additionally, the state has defined goals which have the potential to address many of the macro concerns relative to the water crisis. However, many citizens are only seeing the 'triage' response of bottled water and filters. According to the video records of the meetings of the FWICC, the lack of visual response is not representative of the work that is occurring. With essentially four levels of government engaged, the citizens need to **know** that coordination is taking place and a plan is being employed – and communicated throughout the community.

The Flint Water Advisory Task Force set some excellent goals in their report. We ask that updates to these recommendations are reported as they occur, in a manner that is easily followed, with substantiating data as appropriate. We would further ask that the videos of FWICC meetings (and transcripts), and any other formal meetings related to the water response, are readily available. For those without internet access, perhaps the state can work out an arrangement with the Flint Public Library.

Following are our most pressing concerns:

1. Trust: Broken trust in government must be addressed.
 - a. Citizens need to see that there is honest effort and commitment to identify, respond, and remediate any damage and potential harm in their water delivery system.
 - b. People have not only suffered physically, to some degree, they have also suffered emotionally from the actions of those who were supposed to protect them.
 - c. People have also suffered economically from loss of property value, loss of work, loss of business, etc.
2. Communication: Communication appears to be the most challenging hurdle. Many citizens report a lack of information and others seem to remain unaware of a problem.
 - a. Flint has populations that may not be literate, let alone get a newspaper.
 - b. Many households do not have internet access for news.
 - c. We applaud your willingness to record official meetings which are then made available on-line; many are not aware of their existence.
 - d. Working with schools, churches, neighborhood centers, and health centers may be a good way to ensure concentrated communication.

3. Engagement: There has been a clear commitment to response from a number of agencies, non-profits, churches and private citizens. Unfortunately, we hear that there is an absence of a centralized authority to effectively coordinate response activities, made even more difficult by the multilayered response of four government levels to a wide variety of concerns.
4. Short-term response: Assurance that every family/citizen has been reached to ensure they know of the crisis and that they are informed in writing of services available to them.
5. Long-term response: It is our hope that the various levels of government work together to develop a database that can be used to ensure a long term commitment to the people that were affected and potentially will suffer some form of harm.
 - a. To verify the water delivery infrastructure is safe, from the source to the faucet.
 - b. To monitor health.
 - c. To ensure that people are receiving foods appropriate to intervention.
 - d. To ensure that they have been informed, in writing, of their health rights under the expanded Medicaid health services that have been made available to them.
 - e. To develop a rubric to assess what remediation/services are appropriate to each citizen.
6. Environmentally Responsible Remediation:
 - a. It is our hope that as pipes are replaced, the waste is handled in an environmentally responsible manner.
 - b. Further that any new material used in rebuilding the infrastructure is of materials that pose no other threat, e.g. endocrine disruptors in PVC.
7. Accountability and Transparency:
 - a. We have witnessed several key resignations and know Attorney General Schuette and his investigative task force have filed charges against some staff members. It is our hope that that investigation continues until it is complete.
 - b. Be transparent in what measures are taking place to address what appears to be a culture of disregard for those without economic and political capital.
 - c. Establish measures of accountability for paid/staff responders since members of the community have shared concerns that people 'on the ground' are not performing their jobs with a diligence that indicates accountability.

We trust that all of our elected officials at every level will work together to remediate the problems and ensure a positive future for Flint.

Sincerely,

Judy Karandjeff, President
League of Women Voters of Michigan

Linda Hoff, President
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