

Testimony of Lee-Anne Walters
Examining Federal Administration of the
Safe Drinking Water Act in Flint, Michigan
Testimony Before the U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
Lee Anne Walters
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9:00 a.m.

Hello I am Lee-Anne Walters. My home used to be a place of comfort and safety for my family. It used to be what a home should be, a place of peace and protection from the outside world. That was taken away from us, and not just from my family but from every home and every citizen in Flint. Now my home is known as ground zero. The people in Flint, now stand with the people in DC who suffered their own lead crisis a decade ago, because we now know the horror of poison running from our taps and the negligence of the agencies paid to protect us.

In 2014 a decision was made to switch the water source without the proper testing and enforcement of regulations. The MDEQ claims they misinterpreted federal law regarding corrosion control. They were allowed to tell EPA they were following the law without any verification. The citizens in Flint were assured for 18 months that the water was safe. My home was being tested because of the discoloration of my water and health issues my family was experiencing. We fought with the city and the state that something wrong and we were dismissed. I decided we needed to get to the science if anyone was ever going to believe us. I started researching and educating myself about water.

I had three tests done by City of Flint, using extra steps that tend to minimize lead in water. Those numbers were 104 ppb, 397 ppb and 707 ppb. I contacted the EPA and started working with Miguel Deltoral. He was very thorough and knowledgeable in assisting me. I told Mr. Deltoral I did not believe corrosion control was being used, provided him documentation about this fact, and he verified my findings. Mr. Deltoral questioned the MDEQ, and at first they lied and then later admitted the truth. Mr. Deltoral was the only one willing to address the problem. I requested a copy of his report and made it public because people had a right to know.

With the report public, Susan Hedman, EPA apologized to the Mayor of Flint and the MDEQ, because of policy. No one but Mr. Deltoral was willing to do their job. Mr. Deltoral was told by the ethics attorney to forward all media requests, even during his personal time to them. He was also advised not to talk about Flint or with anyone from Flint. In a meeting I had with MDEQ, Liane Shektor-Smith bragged to me about how Mr. Deltoral was handled, that his report was flawed and there would be no final report. This was the ultimate betrayal for the citizens. Susan Hedman cared more about policy than the welfare of an entire community, while punishing and silencing the one person willing to help.

I started doing independent testing Virginia Tech and thirty tests were done, tests that were performed in accordance to the LCR. My average water lead was 2500 ppb and my highest was 13,200 ppb. Hazardous waste in water is 5,000ppn. Regardless of this information and the fact that my son had lead poisoning, the city and the MDEQ still continued to tell everyone the water was safe, as the EPA sat by and watched in silence.

Because the state and federal government failed us, with the help of Virginia Tech we conducted a citizen based sampling test. We educated and distributed 300 samples equally through the city. We collected back 277 samples. All of this was done in a 3 week turn around.

Here are the facts:

After the tragedy DC from 2001-2006 where children were poisoned by lead in the water, the EPA should have IMMEDIATELY closed the loop holes to protect all citizens.

Had the EPA closed the loop holes then it could have 100% prevented what now took place in Flint

EPA has failed to protect people by refusing to ban partial lead service line replacement.

The EPA's LCR National Report from 2006 states the lack of system response for lead exceedance is especially true to inform the public. It was done less than 1/3 of the time.

From my research I have found this is not a Flint problem or a rare anomaly, this IS a NATIONAL problem.

Only 10 states accurately test according to the LCR, 21 states do not reveal their sampling instructions, and 19 states have testing similar loopholes to Michigan

There is no justifiable reason for the testing loopholes except to hide lead. These loopholes that need to be eliminated.

1. Preflush, 2. Small mouthed Bottles, 3. Cap on Stagnation

I spoke against the NDWAC recommendations that are now currently under advisement by the EPA to change the LCR. These recommendations will weaken an already broken system. I am outraged that the EPA continues to allow this type of dishonesty with testing to continue nationally.

The citizens in Flint are relying on each other because we have no choice, and we trust no one but Virginia Tech. There are people in Flint still today not being assisted during this crisis, illegal immigrants, disabled, and shut-ins. Broken policies and procedures are smothering the outcry of an entire community suffering financially, physically, mentally and emotionally. I urge you to help restore the trust lost and protect to all citizens in the United State by never allowing this to happen again. We need this to happen now, not ten years from now. Thank you.