



ASSOCIATION OF  
METROPOLITAN  
WATER AGENCIES



December 5, 2013

The Honorable Barbara Boxer  
Chairman, Committee on Environment  
and Public Works  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable David Vitter  
Ranking Member, Committee on  
Environment and Public Works  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Boxer and Vitter:

This week the House of Representatives approved H.R. 3588, the Community Fire Safety Act, by a unanimous vote of 384-0. On behalf of local governments and community water systems across the country, the undersigned organizations ask for your assistance in advancing this measure through the Senate before the end of the year.

H.R. 3588 provides an important clarification to P.L. 111-380, which became law in 2010 as the Reduction of Lead in Drinking Water Act. Many of our organizations continue to support the goals of the Act, which are to reduce the amount of lead in pipes and plumbing fixtures that regularly deliver water for human consumption.

However, on October 22, 2013 – less than three months before the January 4, 2014 effective date of P.L. 111-380 – the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for the first time announced that newly installed fire hydrants would also be subject to the law’s lead content requirements. This decision came as a total surprise to communities, many of which hold a multiple-month supply of new hydrants in inventory. Under EPA’s interpretation, these inventories would be rendered obsolete on January 4.

EPA’s interpretation noted that fire hydrants may be occasionally used as an emergency source of drinking water, but overlooked the fact that the health concerns associated with lead are a matter of long-term exposure. Because hydrants typically only serve as emergency water sources for a matter of hours or days, applying the new lead standards would represent a massive investment of community time and resources for little, if any, discernible public health benefit.

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As a result of this decision, cities, towns and counties will be forced to leave numerous broken or inoperable hydrants out-of-service until sufficient numbers of new compliant hydrants can be procured, delivered, and installed. This carries significant public safety risks, while also saddling communities with an unexpected roughly \$2,000-per-unit cost to replace their existing hydrant inventories.

The Community Fire Safety Act addresses this issue by simply adding fire hydrants to the list of devices (such as toilets, bidets, and shower valves) that are already exempt from the new lead content standards. This minor modification will not otherwise impact implementation of P.L. 111-380 on January 4 but will ensure that the replacement and maintenance of fire hydrants may continue uninterrupted after that date.

Again, our organizations request your help in passing H.R. 3588 through the Senate this year. We look forward to working with you to achieve this important public safety objective.

Sincerely,

American Public Works Association  
American Water Works Association  
Association of California Water Agencies  
Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies  
National Association of Counties  
National Association of Water Companies  
National League of Cities  
National Rural Water Association  
United States Conference of Mayors

cc: Members of the United States Senate