



November 26, 2013

The Honorable Bill Johnson
Subcommittee on Environment and the
Economy
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Paul Tonko
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on
Environment and the Economy
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Johnson and Tonko:

The undersigned organizations strongly support H.R. 3588, the “Community Fire Safety Act,” which we understand will be the subject of a vote in the House of Representatives next week.

H.R. 3588 provides an important clarification to P.L. 111-380, which Congress approved in 2010 as the “Reduction of Lead in Drinking Water Act.” Our organizations supported this earlier legislation with the understanding that it would reduce the amount of lead in pipes and plumbing fixtures that regularly deliver water for human consumption, and we continue to enthusiastically endorse this objective.

However, on October 22, 2013 – less than three months before the January 4, 2014 effective date of P.L. 111-380 – U.S. 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 whose inventories of new, uninstalled fire hydrants would be rendered obsolete on January 4.

As a result of this ruling, cities and towns would have to leave numerous broken or inoperable hydrants out-of-service for unknown periods of time, until sufficient numbers of new compliant hydrants could be procured, delivered, and installed. This would carry significant financial costs and public safety risks for communities throughout the country.

The “Community Fire Safety Act” addresses this problem 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 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 strongly support passage of H.R. 3588, and we thank you for your leadership on this important issue.

Sincerely,

American Water Works Association
Association of California Water Agencies
Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies
National Association of Water Companies
National Rural Water Association