



Duckworth Leads Federal Delegation Tour Of Cahokia Heights, Meeting With Residents To Discuss Environmental Justice Issues

by Rachel Huxley-Cohen
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CAHOKIA HEIGHTS, IL – Today, U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), along with Radhika Fox, EPA Assistant Administrator for the Office of Water, Deb Shore, EPA Region 5 Administrator and John Kim, IEPA Director, toured areas of Cahokia Heights that have been hard hit with legacy flooding and sewage issues and led a roundtable discussion with local officials and community members about efforts to address environmental injustice. Also joining Duckworth, Fox and Shore were: Chris Belt, 57th District State Senator; Latoya Greenwood, 114th District State Representative; Jay Hoffman, 113th District State Representative; Mark Kern, St. Clair County Board Chairman; Curtis McCall Sr., Mayor of Cahokia Heights; Joe Ahlvin, Senior Operations Manager; of IL American Water and members of the community. Photos of today’s tour and roundtable are available [here](#).

“For too long, communities like Cahokia Heights have unfairly borne the brunt of environmental injustice, which is why I’m committed to making sure they have the resources to fix their faulty, dangerous and aging water infrastructure that’s been neglected for decades,” said Duckworth. “I’m proud to have written the water and wastewater provisions of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law that are already helping

communities around the country like Cahokia Heights and provisions in the Water Resources Development Act of 2022 to expand the Corps' authority to work with this community and others like it. I'll keep working with the leaders at EPA, IEPA and all relevant agencies to ensure that we make necessary improvements so every resident has access to safe, reliable water and can live without worrying that their neighborhoods will overflow with dangerous raw sewage whenever there is a heavy rain."

"No family should have to worry about raw sewage entering their home. Historically underserved communities have borne a burden of inadequate or poorly functioning wastewater infrastructure for too long," said EPA Assistant Administrator for Water Radhika Fox. "It's important for local, state and federal government to come together to assist communities with accessing solutions to these kinds of water challenges. President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law presents an historic opportunity to assist communities like Cahokia Heights with water infrastructure needs."

Senator Duckworth, along with U.S. Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL), secured more than \$7 million in the Senate's draft Fiscal Year 2023 Appropriations bills which, if it becomes law, would support three separate projects aimed at helping the residents of Cahokia Heights address their community's issues. These projects include \$3.5 million through the Army Corps of Engineers for a new sewer, \$2 million for the City of Cahokia Heights to rehabilitate the current sewer system and \$1.7 million for Centreville Citizens for Change to address the contaminated indoor air and drinking water in many residential homes caused by frequent flooding.

"The Biden-Harris Administration has made communities that have been historically marginalized and overburdened by pollution a top priority," said EPA Region 5 Administrator Debra Shore. "No single agency will be able to solve these problems. To do right by the residents of Cahokia Heights, we must harness all of the resources available and work together - and that's exactly what we are doing."

"We are encouraged by the continued cooperation from local, state, and federal partners working to address the chronic issues that have plagued the area of Cahokia Heights for far too long," said Illinois EPA Director John J. Kim. "Although there is no quick fix to the years of failed infrastructure this area has experienced, Illinois EPA will continue to address these conditions through our ongoing efforts to provide assistance, which include financial assistance, inspections, technical support, and working closely with residents and local officials to ensure their concerns are heard as all partners work towards a remedy. The projects to be implemented over the next several years through financial and technical support from the Illinois EPA will bring real relief to this community and benefit all residents."

Duckworth, Chair of the EPW Subcommittee on Fisheries, Water & Wildlife, secured her entire bipartisan *Drinking Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Act* (DWWIA) in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law in order to [ensure](#) Illinois's and the nation's crumbling water infrastructure will finally receive the significant improvements they need. As Subcommittee Chair, Duckworth has also worked to secure increased authorizations for several counties, including St. Clair, for more water infrastructure projects in Illinois under the Army Corps of Engineers and programs to increase the Army Corps' projects in environmental justice communities in the Senate passed Water Resources Development Act of 2022 (WRDA).

As chair and co-founder of the U.S. Senate [Environmental Justice Caucus](#), Duckworth has been a [strong advocate](#) for bringing environmental justice to Cahokia Heights, [calling on](#) EPA to conduct enhanced monitoring and enforcement of the area and [working to provide](#) federal funding to repair the failing water system. Duckworth has [frequently met](#) with residents to discuss the persistent inland flooding and environmental justice issues the community faces.