

Duckworth, Durbin Join EPA In Announcing \$336 Million For Lead Service Line Removal In Chicago

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CHICAGO – U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), author of the historic *Drinking Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Act*, and U.S. Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL) today joined U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Assistant Administrator for Water Radhika Fox in announcing a \$336 million *Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act* (WIFIA) loan to the City of Chicago to help replace up to 30,000 lead pipes that deliver water to homes across the city. This is a

critical advancement for Chicago's efforts to replace its nearly 400,000 lead service lines. There is no safe level of lead for a child and lead-contaminated drinking water is a key source of youth lead poisoning that results in permanent and irreversible brain damage. Duckworth and Durbin joined Fox, Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson and other leaders today in Chicago's Calumet Heights neighborhood to announce this financing and highlight a current lead service line replacement project. Photos from today's event are available on the [Senator's website](#).

"Every American deserves access to clean, safe, reliable water, but all too often, this neglect disproportionately affects underserved, underfunded communities and historically communities of color," Duckworth said. "Making sure all families have access to clean water is important to me, it's why I pushed to ensure my *Drinking Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Act* was included in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, and why I'm committed to helping ensure Chicago and Illinois have the resources they need to achieve our goal of removing every lead pipe in America over the next decade. I look forward to doing everything I can to support the city as we work aggressively to transform our bold vision into a new reality."

"Far too many generations have suffered the devastating effects of lead contamination, with its most tragic consequences visited upon our children," said Durbin. "The removal of lead pipes in Chicago is not just an investment in our infrastructure; it's an investment in the future of our city, the well-being of our residents, and the foundation for a healthier, more equitable society."

"Whether you are a resident of Chicago or any city across this nation, no person should worry if their water is safe to drink or if it will harm their children. With EPA's \$336 million loan, the City of Chicago will replace up to 30,000 lead pipes so that more local residents can rest assured that their water is safe," said EPA Assistant Administrator for Water Radhika Fox. "The Biden-Harris Administration is committed to removing all lead pipes across this country and EPA is using every tool available to address this public health issue. We are strengthening our regulations, investing in lead pipe replacement programs with \$15 billion in dedicated funding under the President's Investing in America agenda, and we are prioritizing lead pipe removal under this program."

Co-founder of the U.S. Senate's Environmental Justice Caucus, improving water infrastructure in Illinois and across the country has been one of Duckworth's top priorities. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law [included](#) Duckworth's *Drinking Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Act (DWWIA)* and is the most significant federal investment in water infrastructure in history. *DWWIA*, which has a focus on disadvantaged

communities, will help rebuild our nation's crumbling and dangerous water infrastructure and enable communities to repair and modernize their failing wastewater systems.

Following the 2016 report of lead in Chicago's drinking water, Durbin and then-Rep. Duckworth urged EPA to use its full authority and resources to address the issue, including reviewing the Lead and Copper Rule (LCR) and immediate notification of lead contamination. In March 2021, Durbin and Duckworth sent a [letter](#) to EPA urging it to update the LCR. They followed this with another [letter](#) in October 2022, joined by 13 of their Senator colleagues, to EPA calling for a strong Lead and Copper Rule Improvements proposal, which it intends to finalize by October 2024. Durbin and Duckworth also have led efforts to appropriate funding in Fiscal Years 2023 and 2024 to meet the Biden Administration's 10-year goal to address 100 percent of lead pipes.

The City of Chicago will use the WIFIA funding to assist with replacing lead service lines serving single-family homes and small multi-unit buildings citywide whenever there is a leak or break on a lead line or when performing water and sewer main updates. Although Chicago's water is in compliance with state and federal safety regulations, the city is committed to replacing all the legacy lead lines to help ensure that the water system is lead-free for generations to come.

The WIFIA loan will be distributed over three years at \$112 million a year. By offering the city flexible loan terms, the City of Chicago will be able to maintain affordable rates while implementing this critical project. Construction and operation are estimated to create approximately 2,700 jobs.