

Duckworth, Durbin Statement On Proposed Strengthening Of EPA's Lead And Copper Rule

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – 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 applauded the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) proposed strengthening of the Lead and Copper Rule (LCR), which would lower the lead action level and require water systems to replace all their old and deteriorating lead pipes within the decade, following the Senators' continuing calls for these actions:

“We applaud the Biden Administration for continuing to prioritize the health of our families by working to strengthen the Lead and Copper Rule. Setting this ambitious goal to remove the vast majority of our nation’s lead pipes within 10 years is a bold action that will help save our children’s future. We know there is no safe level of lead for a child to ingest, and we know that lead-contaminated drinking water is a key source of poisoning that results in permanent and irreversible brain damage. Every American deserves access to clean, safe and reliable water, but all too often underserved, underfunded communities and historically communities of color—especially those in Chicagoland—do not have that access. With this improved rule—along with historic investments from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law—we can make a lead-free future in Illinois a reality.”

As a co-founder of the U.S. Senate’s Environmental Justice Caucus and the Senate Lead Task Force, 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, including \$15 billion for lead line replacements. DWWIA, which focuses on disadvantaged communities, is already helping 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 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. 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.

Earlier this month, EPA [awarded](#) Chicago 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.