

Michigan governor's Flint "action plan": A cover for criminality

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Michigan's Republican Governor Rick Snyder announced a "75-point action plan" to address Flint's lead poisoning crisis on Monday. The most noticeable aspect of Snyder's announcement is its lack of a plan to replace the city's aged and largely lead pipe water infrastructure.

After almost two years of deception by state agencies claiming that Flint's water complied with standards set by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in the Lead and Copper Rule (LCR), Snyder criticized the rule as "dumb and dangerous," claiming to be in favor of a higher standard.

He told the *Detroit News* last week, "My view is I want Michigan to be a role model for setting that standard, so I'm going to be calling for legislation to make that standard much higher."

These are fine words for a man who oversaw both the cut-off of Flint from its source of treated Lake Huron drinking water and then the campaign of deception by state agencies under his command, particularly the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ), insisting that the water in Flint was safe to drink.

In order to evade his own responsibility, Snyder implies the fault was with the "dumb and dangerous" LCR. Whatever weaknesses that exist in the LCR were used by Michigan officials to consciously cover up the lead levels and "have their way with Flint's children," in the words of Virginia Tech University professor Marc Edwards, an expert on lead in water.

The EPA's Miguel Del Toral, one of the leading LCR experts in the country, warned in June last year, in his now-famous internal memo, that "the high lead levels will likely not be reflected in the City of Flint's compliance samples due to the sampling procedures used by the City of Flint for collecting compliance

samples."

On June 25, the day after Del Toral's memo, Adam Rosenthal, from the MDEQ, directed Mike Glasgow of the City of Flint to submit preselected water samples below the EPA action level: "We hope you have 61 more lead/copper samples collected and sent to the lab by 6/30/15, and that they will be below the AL [action level] for lead. As of now with 39 results, Flint's 90th percentile is over the AL for lead."

Remarkably, Rosenthal is still employed by the MDEQ.

With unrivaled cynicism, Snyder spokesman Ari Adler told the press Monday, in reference to the LCR, "The federal government is basically saying you can have a high lead level for up to 10 percent of your population and it's okay, and Gov. Snyder does not think that way."

Snyder has yet to formulate his alternative proposal.

Snyder's "75-point plan" is largely self-serving bluster. The limited measures outlined in the plan do not compensate for two years of ignoring the complaints and demands of Flint citizens for safe drinking water.

In terms of addressing infrastructure, the plan calls for a "pilot project," contracted to Rowe Engineering, to replace 30 lead service lines. Snyder's 75 points were divided into short, intermediate and long-term goals and are clearly designed to return the best public relations with the least commitment of resources.

The man-made water disaster in Flint has focused US and international attention on the question of water. The Obama White House sponsored an online seminar yesterday to mark "World Water Day." The three-and-a-half-hour affair this year featured 15-20 presentations. The participants included representatives of federal agencies, state and local governmental bodies, as well

as private companies, investment firms and various water advocacy groups.

Notably missing was Gina McCarthy, the head of the Obama administration's EPA, who on March 17 was called upon to testify before a Congressional hearing on Flint. She insisted throughout the proceedings that the EPA had no responsibility for the poisoning of Flint's citizens. Two days earlier, in a hearing before the same Congressional panel, Dr. Edwards had charged that the EPA had "aided, abetted and emboldened" the atmosphere of cheating on the LCR that pervaded Michigan's agencies.

Much of the White House event focused on future water "challenges" resulting from climate change. Presentations addressed the existing lack of data on the use of water. New technology that is able to track past water flow patterns and predict future environmental events based on computer modeling technology was touted by various agency representatives.

During his talk, Dan Kildee, the Democratic Party congressman from Flint, referred to what he called a "brand of governmental austerity" against a "backdrop of an aged infrastructure" that resulted in the Flint catastrophe. The "obsession with austerity" led to "unbelievable decisions," Kildee said.

Kildee rather feebly called for a greater federal role in guaranteeing safe drinking water. Kildee's comments are aimed at covering up for the role of the Democratic Party and the Obama administration in creating the disaster in Flint. The "obsession with austerity" has been intensified under Obama. Since 2003, public capital investment in transportation and water infrastructure has been cut by 23 percent.



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