

# Michelle Wolf's Flint comment touches a nerve in Michigan's capital

Jim Brewer  
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As Michelle Wolf was leaving the podium at the end of her courageous and funny takedown of Trump, the Democrats and the press at the White House correspondents' dinner last Saturday, she added, "...and Flint still doesn't have clean water." This is a statement with which a large majority of the city's 100,000 residents would agree.

From the office of Michigan Governor Rick Snyder, however, it elicited an indignant rejoinder.

In an email to *MLive/The Flint Journal*, Snyder's chief spokesperson, Anna Heaton, said, "Inaccurate comments from comedians will not help the city move forward."

Snyder's use of the phrase "move forward" means closing the book on Flint. A month ago, Snyder announced the termination of the last of the PODS, the state-funded distribution sites for bottled water and filters to Flint residents. Even though the city's program for replacing lead and galvanized steel (which can also act as a repository of lead) service lines is only one-third finished and isn't scheduled to be completed until 2020, the minimal assistance of providing bottled water to residents has been wound up.

The pipe replacement program does not even include the mains. There are no plans to replace the entire antiquated water infrastructure, which was built decades ago. Moreover, nothing has been done to address the damage done by corrosive Flint River water to the pipes inside residents' homes.

The governor's justification for cutting off bottled water distribution for Flint was laid out in Heaton's comments: "All state scientists and independent scientists who have collected their own samples and data agree that Flint's water system is testing well beneath the federal standards for lead and that the city's water is in fact of better quality than many other

US cities of similar size and age."

For Flint's populace, the vast majority of whom will not drink Flint water, this merely adds insult to injury.

In addition to being poisoned, losing unborn babies, enduring an outbreak of Legionnaires' disease that killed at least 12 people, and having a generation of children who face lifelong neurological damage, the population as a whole has suffered immense trauma and stress, not to mention the collapse of their home values.

The crisis in Flint has brought to light a widespread state and national lead-in-water crisis. Because of media attention and state and federal hearings, it is now widely known that the federal standards cited by the governor are long outdated.

The "action level" set by the US Environmental Protection Agency in 1991--only four years after lead pipe was outlawed in new construction--of 15 parts of lead to a billion parts of water, is long overdue for revision. There are no safe levels of lead exposure according to another government agency, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The state's agenda is no different than it was when officials decided over five years ago to change Flint's water source: privatize the water system in order to generate profits for investors, speculators and the ruling elite in general.

In February, a report issued by the University of Michigan School of Public Health said Snyder "bears significant legal responsibility for the (Flint water) crisis based on his supervisory role over state agencies," adding, "But reports, interviews and released emails suggest that by October 2014, the governor's staff was sufficiently aware... that several top aides were arguing that Flint should return to using water from (the city of Detroit)."

Yet Snyder has never been charged, let alone

prosecuted, for any crime, and he remains in office.

Flint Mayor Karen Weaver, a Democrat elected on the promise of solving the city's water crisis, issued a pathetic response to the exchange over Wolf's comment, saying that the comedian was helping the city by "talking and thinking about Flint." Her administration has taken nothing but palliative measures to address the crisis, concentrating her efforts on dissipating public anger and channeling protests into futile lobbying of the political representatives of the banks and corporations such as Nestl? Waters.



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