

Michigan Democrats drop all charges against Flint water poisoning conspirators

Sheila Brehm
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The Michigan State Attorney General's Office on Thursday dismissed all pending criminal charges—including involuntary manslaughter—against eight officials implicated in the water poisoning of the Flint population. The political establishment is using the change in administration that brought Democrat Gretchen Whitmer into the governor's mansion in 2018 not to arrest and hold accountable those who were responsible for the worst man-made health crisis in US history, but to wipe the slate clean by dropping all criminal cases more than three years since the first charges were filed.

The state has dropped the case against former Michigan Department of Health and Human Services Director Nick Lyon, who faced a felony involuntary manslaughter charge that could bring a 15-year prison term and a misconduct in office charge (up to five years imprisonment) based on allegations that he failed to warn the public in a timely manner about the deadly 2014–15 Legionnaires' disease outbreak. At least 13 people died from Legionnaires' and more than 100 who died from pneumonia may have been misdiagnosed and actually succumbed to Legionnaires', according to a recent study.

The charges were also dismissed against former Chief Medical Executive Eden Wells, who no longer is set to stand trial on involuntary manslaughter and other charges. Charges were also dropped against six other state and Flint officials.

Attorney General Dana Nessel stated that Flint residents should rest assured that "justice delayed is not always justice denied." Michigan Solicitor General Fadwa Hammoud and prosecutor Kym Worthy in a joint statement claimed the investigation under the Republican administration was built on a "flawed foundation," but no details were provided.

In the announcement, there was no claim that the charges against Lyon, Wells and the others were unfounded. Rather, several years of testimony and evidence will be scrapped along with \$30.6 million of taxpayers' money. The hearings, which began in 2016, moved at glacial speed. They were conducted by former Attorney General Bill Schuette, in part to promote his bid for governor, but more importantly, to provide a pretense that the wheels of justice were turning.

In fact, what is being undertaken is a new stage in the bipartisan cover-up of a criminal money-making scheme that resulted in the poisoning of Flint's largely working class and low-income population of 100,000 people.

The capitalist media continues to portray the Flint water crisis as the result of an attempt to reduce expenses and ease the city's financial crisis. Actually, it was part of the drive by powerful financial interests and their political mouthpieces in both parties to exploit the collapse of the economic base of deindustrialized cities such as Detroit and Flint, whose position was further undermined by the Wall Street crash of 2008, in order to plunder public assets, claw back whatever remained of the past social gains of workers—pensions, health care, education, etc.—and repay with interest the losses suffered by the financial elite in the financial meltdown.

The human toll of this massive crime is enormous. Flint's population, including 9,000 children, was poisoned for 18 months before the official lies were exposed and the city returned to its original water source. During that time, the city drew its water supply from the toxic Flint River and its water infrastructure was progressively eaten away from the inside. The long-term health consequences of the protracted exposure to

lead and other toxins are incalculable.

Lead is a highly dangerous **neurotoxin** that can attack any system in the body when ingested, even in low dosages. Once in the system, it cannot be removed. It can stunt growth and cause neurological damage, leading to emotional and behavioral issues in children, who are the most vulnerable to lead poisoning due to the rapid development of their bodies.

Flint residents have not been compensated at all for medical expenses, plummeting home values or high water rates for undrinkable water.

Five years since the onset of the water poisoning, not one official has been arrested or served jail time. The major figures responsible for trying to silence those who protested the foul water, and who tried to expose the extent of the damage, have never been charged. These include former Republican Governor Rick Snyder, former State Treasurer Andy Dillon, a Democrat, Jeff Wright, Obama Environmental Protection Agency official Susan Hedman and former Democratic Mayor Dayne Walling.

The only people who have been arrested are six residents who were peacefully protesting the impact of the Flint water crisis on their families at a town hall meeting on April 20, 2017. They were handcuffed and dragged off by heavily-armed police for exercising their freedom of speech.

Attorney General Nessel's claim that "justice delayed is not always justice denied" amounts to a bitter joke to Flint's residents, who are outraged by the latest maneuvers to avoid any meaningful prosecution.

A comment on M-Live's Facebook page states: "Our country and our state have become the laughing stock of the civilized world. How fast we have fallen. The deck is stacked against the common people. We are devolving into a fascist run society, where rules don't apply to the rule makers. What a JOKE!"

LeAnne Walters, the Flint mother who helped expose the crisis after discovering alarming lead levels in the water in her home, told the *Detroit News* she thinks the dismissals are a "huge insult" to local residents. "This is just as big of an injustice as when we were poisoned," Walters said. "And until new charges are filed, that's how I'm going to feel."

"I think it's awful and complete bulls—," said Flint resident Florlisa Fowler. "I have lost all faith in the state investigation, and I personally believe the state

should not be investigating its own anyway. This has gone on for years... if we are starting all over again, I do not want to see them handling it. I do not trust their capacity for justice for the people."

Katie Sabin, another Flint resident, told the WSWS: "When hearing about the dismissal all I could think about was where is the justice for the people like Lori Carter that lost her life due to Legionnaires' and cancer? And how many more lives will it take before politicians are held responsible? I feel the new administration backtracked on everything she ran on from our water crisis to Line 5. This is just another slap in the face, while they play their political games and most of us cannot afford to move out of this god forsaken mess."



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