

Michigan's "Poisoner-in-Chief" endorses Biden for president

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Rick Snyder, the former Republican governor of Michigan, despised by millions in the US and internationally for his role in the poisoning of Flint's water supply, gave his support to Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden on Thursday.

An op-ed in the *Detroit Free Press* announcing his support for Biden includes the claim that "President Trump ... has demonstrated that he does not fully appreciate public policy matters, including public health..." One public health criminal denounces another.

The Biden campaign and the Democratic Party apparently welcome the support of the widely-hated governor who oversaw, lied and covered up the water poisoning. This shows how indifferent and hostile the Democrats are towards the 90,000 residents of Flint who overwhelmingly believe Snyder and his accomplices should be in jail. The losses suffered by Flint residents are incalculable—dozens, if not hundreds of preventable deaths, miscarriages, immense loss of income, plummeting home values and life-long illnesses for adults and particularly children.

Snyder's endorsement is part of a calculated and coordinated effort by the Biden campaign to win support from Republicans. A coalition of nearly one hundred former and current officeholders, government officials and political operatives is affiliated and funded by the Lincoln Project, which denounces Trump primarily on foreign policy grounds, for his alleged "softness" on China and Russia.

Since the crisis erupted in 2015, the Democratic Party has cynically used the plight of Flint workers and youth as a means to secure votes and keep workers tied to capitalist politics while attempting to conceal the fact that the largest public health crisis in the US, before the coronavirus pandemic, was man-made and motivated by the drive for profit.

Bernie Sanders and Hilary Clinton made appearances in Flint during the 2016 presidential campaign, pretending sympathy for the residents, only to be upstaged by President Obama, who infamously told residents to drink the lead-tainted water, and that "your kids will be okay." Little wonder that the Democratic margin in Genesee County, which includes Flint, plunged from 57,165 in 2012 to only 18,570 in 2016—in a state which Trump won by only 10,704 votes.

The truth of the matter is that, like Snyder, the Democratic Party wants to finally put Flint and its lead-poisoned population behind it. The \$600 million settlement offered by the state of Michigan and announced in July is a paltry amount. Before legal fees are deducted and before it is approved by the courts, the settlement is only the most recent insult to workers and their children. It is a betrayal of Flint residents and follows the 2019 decision by Democratic state attorney general Dana Nessel to drop all pending criminal charges, including involuntary manslaughter, against eight officials implicated in the water poisoning.

Snyder's commentary denouncing Trump and endorsing Biden is full of insufferable hypocrisy. Without apparent irony, the multi-millionaire venture capitalist proclaims, "When elected to office, you do not represent only your supporters, you represent all of your constituents."

In practice, of course, Snyder openly flouted the will of the people of Michigan. After voters repealed the state's emergency manager law in a referendum, Snyder embraced a plan by the Republican-controlled legislature to enact a nearly identical law to establish dictatorial state control over economically depressed municipalities in order to plunder their assets and slash the jobs, wages, pensions and social services of working-class residents.

The entire concept of an emergency manager is in flagrant violation of basic democratic principles. The working people of Flint and Detroit had no input as unelected financial czars decided the fate of jobs, pensions and city services.

Armed with this authority, Snyder appointed Flint Emergency Manager Ed Kurtz in 2012, who signed the contract committing Flint to the Karegnondi Water Authority (KWA) deal and sanctioned the use of the toxic Flint River as the city's water source pending completion of the KWA pipeline. Furthermore, Snyder appointed Andy Dillon, the former Democratic speaker of the Michigan House of Representatives, as his State Treasurer. Dillon subsequently authorized Flint's involvement in the KWA pipeline project.

The real charade however, comes when Snyder takes Trump to task for his rejection of scientific evidence. "Facts and science matter. Good decisions should be based on facts and supported by sound scientific theory whenever possible," he writes. "President Trump's answer to people who oppose or disagree with them is to be verbally abusive. In other words, he is a bully."

Almost immediately after Flint's water supply was switched to the untreated Flint River in 2014, Snyder, along with the rest of the political establishment, ignored residents' protests about the foul-smelling and discolored water, which was causing rashes, hair loss and illnesses.

In September 2015 Snyder's office targeted, some might say "bullied," the Flint pediatrician Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha with a slanderous campaign, saying she was "splicing and dicing" data and needlessly causing hysteria when she reported dangerously high blood lead levels in the city's children.

For 18 months, lead-laced water was coursing through the bodies of the men, women and children of Flint. It was not until October 2015 that the Detroit River was reestablished as Flint's water source, but incalculable damage had already been done. Still, Snyder waited until January 2016 to declare a state of emergency in the city.

But it is not just the city of Flint that suffered under Snyder's ruling class bullying. The entire campaign to impose bankruptcy on the city of Detroit and destroy pensions, jobs and public services was carried out by the emergency manager Kevyn Orr, a Democrat appointed by the Republican Snyder.

In May 2016 Detroit teachers organized sick-outs to protest the disastrous state of that city's public school system, which has been starved of funds for decades as resources have been diverted into privately-owned, for-profit charter schools. Appearing on CBS News, Snyder declared that Detroit teachers must end their protests over school conditions because they were "harming the children."

Snyder's commentary charges that Trump lacks civility, empathy and respect for his political opponents. However, the same and more can be said of Snyder. There are countless examples of the utter disregard for the people he poisoned. In April 2018, Snyder stopped the distribution of free bottled water to Flint residents. The decision came four days after his administration signed a new agreement with Nestlé to allow the multinational conglomerate to pump 570,000 gallons per day—two-and-a-half times the supply for every person in Flint. The charge to Nestlé was \$200 per year. An average Flint family pays between \$120 and \$200 *each month* for water which is not safe to drink from the tap. Flint families have been relying on charities for free water for more than two years.

Biden and the Democratic Party's embrace of Snyder and other Republican Party operatives demonstrates his campaign's further lurch to the right and its outright hostility to the working class not only in Flint, but in the US and internationally. It is notable that when Harvard University offered Snyder a senior research fellowship, the political uproar forced the university to rescind the offer.

The Biden campaign won't be renouncing Snyder's endorsement. In fact, the Democrats are so thrilled about winning his support that emails hailing the endorsement were blasted out within hours. What corporate or ruling class criminal will be next?



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