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March 23, 2004

Mr. Thomas P. Jacobus, P.E.
General Manager
Washington Aqueduct
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
5900 MacArthur Boulevard, NW
Washington, DC 20016

Dear Mr. Jacobus:

On March 5, 2004, the Committee on Government Reform held a hearing entitled "Public Confidence, Down the Drain: The Federal Role in Ensuring Safe Drinking Water in the District of Columbia." We received testimony from you on behalf of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Washington Aqueduct at that hearing.

As a result of the hearing, the Committee has a number of questions for the hearing record concerning Washington Aqueduct's role in exercising its responsibilities to prevent lead contamination in tap water in the District of Columbia drinking water supply. Those questions are as follows:

1. It has been widely speculated that chloramines used to kill bacteria may be more corrosive to lead pipes. What steps have been taken to further investigate that theory? Prior to changing the treatment process to chloramines, did Washington Aqueduct conduct a literature review or any direct research into the potential relationship between chloramines and corrosivity? If not, why not?

2. Was anyone at Washington Aqueduct notified of or provided the 2000-2001 lead monitoring results showing four samples over 15 ppb, of which two were over 100 ppb? If so, who received the notification or results and when? Were they viewed as an indicator of a potential increased corrosivity of the water?

3. When was anyone at Washington Aqueduct informed of the exceedence of the lead action level in 2002? Who received such information and was this considered to be an indicator of a potential increased corrosivity of the water? What specific actions, if any, did Washington Aqueduct take upon receiving this information?

4. EPA commissioned research on corrosivity issues in the District's water in May 2003. What was Washington Aqueduct doing at that time to address the issue?

5. When was anyone at Washington Aqueduct first informed of any of the sampling results from WASA's tests of lead service lines in the summer of 2003? Who received such information and were the results determined to indicate increased corrosivity of the water? What specific actions did Washington Aqueduct take in response to this information?

6. It appears that chlorine, chloramines, and phosphate addition all potentially have significant drawbacks. At the March 5, 2004, hearing in the House Committee on Government Reform, one witness, Mr. Erik Olson with the Natural Resources Defense Council, urged Washington Aqueduct to upgrade to modern water treatment methods, such as granular activated carbon and UV disinfection or ozone. Is Washington Aqueduct evaluating the benefits and costs of upgrading its water treatment plants in the District? Please describe the scope and method for any such evaluation. If not, why is Washington Aqueduct not considering this option?

7. What steps is Washington Aqueduct taking to reassess and manage the combination of treatment methods needed to reduce corrosivity of the water supply and maintain required protection against harmful contaminants found in drinking water?

Please provide answers to these questions by April 9, 2004.

Sincerely,

Tom Davis
Chairman

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Ranking Member

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Member of Congress

Chris Van Hollen
Member of Congress