

PLUMBERS AND PIPEFITTERS LOCAL UNION NO. 9

CENTRAL NEW JERSEY AFL-CIO

2 Iron Ore Road at Route 33, Englishtown, NJ 07726

Telephone: (732) 792-0999 • Fax: (732) 792-1999

Website: www.ualocal9.org



BUSINESS MANAGER

Michael K. Maloney
Secretary-Treasurer

BUSINESS AGENTS

Charles F. Whalen III, *Assistant Business Manager*
Nicholas M. Oberto John E. Hoey, Jr.
Robert A. Dill Michael A. Tranberg
Orlando R. Candelori, *Air Conditioning Division*

ORGANIZERS

Dean Feasel
William K. Graybush

Good Morning members of the Joint Legislative Task Force on Drinking Water

Infrastructure

My name is Michael Maloney I am the Business Manager, Financial Secretary of Plumbers and Pipefitters Local Union # 9 I am also President of the New Jersey State Pipetrades. The Pipetrades are part of our International union that is called the United Association. The UA consists of all plumbing, pipefitting, steam fitting, sprinkler fitting and HVAC/R service local unions in the State of New Jersey as well as the United States and Canada. Although I am not an expert witness on this matter I am for the record a licensed master plumber in our State and I am on the Board of Master Plumbers as its Vice Chairman I am also a licensed HVAC/R contractor and I am also a member of the board of HVAC/R examiners as its chairman. I am also a Licensed plumbing and mechanical inspector in our State. I also sit as a member on the Department of Community Affairs Plumbing sub-code committee and lastly I am also a member of the board of director of the National Standard Plumbing Code and that is the code that has jurisdiction for the State of New Jersey. Thank you for allowing me to testify here today in front of this committee.

- UA represents 340,000 members, and our members build and maintain water and wastewater systems . . .
- Our members also serve as inspectors for water systems; and UA officers serve on industry boards relating to the water industry (e.g., IAPMO).

1. Like many components of U.S. infrastructure, our water and wastewater systems are failing, and in need of major work . . .

- According to the American Society of Civil Engineers, our water systems receive an abysmal grade of a "D" (per latest ASCE report card from 2013); and, it will require billions and billions of dollars in funding to fix these systems . . . but . . . do we really have a choice?
- It is an absolute crime that in this day and age, you can have a tragedy like we've seen in Flint where some 8,000 innocent children were literally poisoned due to inexcusable actions or inactions of govt. that failed to ensure safe water.
- Even worse—Flint is only ONE of thousands of water systems in jurisdictions across the country that are in the danger zone for unsafe levels of lead, copper and other contaminants. These are big cities and small towns and in many of the worse cases, these are water systems that serve our children's schools.
- Add to all this the fact that we're seeing almost a 1/4 of a million water main breaks per year that result in the loss of tons of precious resources and also cause extensive property damage and other problems --- and that we have wastewater systems failing routinely during storms resulting in the discharge of literally billions of gallons on untreated wastewater.
- The widespread failure of these essential infrastructure systems has massive negative consequences -- including huge economic damages, and serious dangers to public health and harm to the environment.
- The fact that that all of this is happening in one of the wealthiest, most advanced nations on earth is simply unacceptable (and likely something that drives average taxpayers crazy); we need action and answers and plans and we need them now to start turning things around.
- In short, the answer lies in education, education, education – of the public, of policy-makers and all industry stakeholders
-
- Our education efforts need to then be transformed into mobilization and activism so we can convince government at all levels – federal, state and local – to take this issue seriously and come up with a plan and some real solutions . . .
- We have to fully fund this critical infrastructure -- and police the operations of these systems once they are built – and develop good enforcement tools to guarantee safety standards are met and public health is fully protected going forward into the future.

- According to the EPA, the U.S. will need some \$655 billion over the next 20 years to repair and replace drinking water and wastewater systems—which translates to almost \$33 billion per year . . . (EPA 2016; other estimates may be higher, but this is ballpark)
-
- So, the bottom line is that ratepayers are going to have to understand that their water bills are going to be higher in their future; but who can argue with this when we are talking about public safety and health? (In contrast, look at what we all pay in monthly cable and cell phone bills).

Benefits of Rebuilding our systems

- In modern society, in the US of A in the 21st century , clean drinking water and safe sanitation systems should be guaranteed, they should be a given; the cost is what it is. So, while we must fix these systems as efficiently and cost-effectively as possible, the “need” to do this – is simply beyond debate.
- In terms of benefits, the No. 1 benefit is protecting the health of our children and grandchildren.
- On top of this--there are numerous major economic benefits that come from ensuring safe water system on one hand; and there are tremendous costs, astronomical really, that we will face if we fail to act on the other.
- For example, a key benefit is jobs; a recent report by the National Blue Green Alliance found that we could create 2.7 million jobs in rebuilding our water infrastructure.
- Also, the ASCE 2011 report found that by investing \$84 billion over several years, we could protect another: (1) 700,000 jobs, (2) \$541 billion in personal income, and (3) \$6 billion in U.S. exports.

Need is Not Just in Flint

- Flint is a tragedy, there’s no doubt about it We have had 100s of UA member donating 1,000s of hours to help the city recover and it still has a long, long way to go. But when we look beyond Flint, what we see is an absolute crisis.
- A comprehensive investigative report this year from USA Today revealed that the testing of almost 2,000 water systems across the U.S. showed excessive levels of lead contamination; this impacts at least 350 schools and daycare centers serviced by the these systems.

- But it gets worse—according to a another recent by the National Resources Defense Council, there are over 5,000 community water systems across the U.S. that are currently in violation of the Environmental Protection Agency’s (“the EPA”) lead and copper standards.
- This makes you wonder whether the “D” we got by American Society of Civil Engineers was generous (of course that was in their latest report, which was 2013, well before all of this broke and before the full extent of the problem was clear).

Benefits of Investments

- If these facts and statistics and reports cannot convince policymakers that we need to rebuild our water infrastructure – something is very wrong;
- And, talking in terms of benefits and costs may not be the best approach—safe water should be a basic right not subject to a cost-benefit analysis. After all, would anyone find it acceptable to allow water to be contaminated to the point of it poisoning our children?
- We have to start getting creative by looking at things like a new National Infrastructure Bank, the expansion of Build America Bonds, and new strategies for local water utilities to take the case for new infrastructure to their ratepayers.
- Water supply systems, including water mains and the lines that run right up to your house; These and our waste water systems need to be a big priority.
- BGA estimates that we may need to replace up to 7.3 million lead water lines that run from water mains to single and multi-family residences and other buildings, such as schools, hospitals and day-care centers.
- Likewise, fixing outdated water mains to prevent the 240,000 water main breaks that occur annually and cost about \$2.6 billion per year in damage, not including the loss of critical clean water supply.
- Updating wastewater and sewer systems is also essential since inadequate capacity of these systems result in overflows during storms that drive the discharge of billions of gallons of untreated wastewater that has to be stopped.
- Water conservation projects should also be a priority; our union has been doing some extensive R&D in this area and certain parts of the country affected by droughts, especially the west. We should also be developing rain water and gray water catchment systems to preserve and conserve water supply.