



July 5, 2017

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the leading engineering and water utility organizations that design and manage the nation’s water systems, we are joining together to raise serious concerns over materials preference legislation that – under the guise of promoting “open competition” -- seeks to legislate technical decisions related to pipes and other materials that should be made by licensed engineers and local communities.

We share a strong commitment to ensuring that the American people have access to clean and reliable water and wastewater systems. The engineers, water professionals and local communities take this responsibility very seriously, as we have an obligation to protect public health, to use limited public resources in the most efficient manner possible, and to promote economic development.

Unfortunately, there are efforts at the state level and nationally that would actually undermine these goals, supersede engineering judgment and impose new mandates on communities with the sole purpose of using government to promote the use of plastic pipe for various water projects.

The marketplace for pipes and other materials is already open and competitive, which calls into question the stated purpose of this legislation. More importantly, however, technical decisions on materials such as pipes should not be made in the political arena, but rather by professional engineers based on the unique needs of each system, taking into account critical factors such as structural integrity, soil compatibility, maintenance and life cycle costs. While certain pipe material may appear to be a better option based on initial acquisition costs, it may be more expensive to install and may lead to increased maintenance and replacement costs in the future if that material is not suitable for the project conditions. This could result in higher life-cycle costs for the project, as well as environmental damage or permit violations.

Imposing new materials mandates not only interferes with sound engineering judgment, but also with the ability of communities to manage their systems as efficiently as possible. Communities should remain free to adopt system-wide best management practices and uniform specifications in the development and maintenance of their water systems to maximize efficiency and control costs, rather than forcing them to comply with more red tape from above.

Efforts to pass this legislation in the states have been uniformly rejected, for the reasons stated above, as have previous efforts to pass this legislation in Congress. On behalf of the tens of thousands of water systems throughout the country, the engineers who serve them, and the public served by them, we respectfully urge you to oppose materials preference legislation.

Sincerely,

American Council of Engineering Companies  
American Public Works Association  
American Society of Civil Engineers  
American Water Works Association  
Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies

Association of Regional Water Organizations  
National Association of Clean Water Agencies  
National Society of Professional Engineers  
Rural Water Association  
Water Environment Federation