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The Authoritative Resource on Safe Water®

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## NewsRelease

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### **AWWA testifies that science should be basis for regulations on perchlorate, other water contaminants**

WASHINGTON (DC) – In testimony this morning before the U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works, the [American Water Works Association](http://www.awwa.org) (AWWA) urged that sound, peer-reviewed science should drive regulatory decisions on perchlorate and other drinking water contaminants.

The hearing, entitled “Oversight Hearing on Public Health and Drinking Water Issues,” focused on two contaminants: perchlorate and chromium-6.

During the hearing, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Lisa Jackson announced that the agency would move forward with perchlorate regulation, reversing a 2008 preliminary determination. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and EPA’s own Inspector General had previously concluded that a national regulation for perchlorate in drinking water would not present a meaningful opportunity to reduce risk, as required by the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA). AWWA’s own assessment was consistent with those findings.

“EPA’s decision to move forward on perchlorate regulation is perplexing,” AWWA Deputy Executive Director Tom Curtis said following the hearing. “Water providers share the Agency’s interest in protecting public health through the provision of safe water. However, the weight of scientific evidence suggests national regulation of perchlorate in drinking water does not accomplish this goal. AWWA remains committed to working with EPA and its member utilities to inform the perchlorate regulatory process as it moves forward.”

U.S. Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.), who chaired the hearing, recently introduced two pieces of legislation that would compel EPA to issue standards for perchlorate and chromium-6. In delivering AWWA’s testimony, Charles Murray, general manager of Virginia-based Fairfax Water, called for “scientific processes and faithfulness to the Safe Drinking Water Act.”

“The bottom line is that Congress should not legislate individual drinking water standards,” Murray testified. “The SDWA was amended in 1996 to provide a scientifically sound and transparent method for selecting the appropriate substances for regulation and for selecting the appropriate maximum contaminant level for contaminants. We should allow the best available science, not the political process, to be the ultimate driver in regulatory decisions.”

Witnesses at the hearing included Administrator Jackson, as well as members of the public health, water utility and environmental advocacy communities. Among the witnesses was a representative from the Environmental Working Group (EWG), which released a December 2010 report raising public concern about chromium-6 nationwide. EPA responded to the report just two days after its release by committing to a series of actions, including recommending water utilities monitor for the contaminant and issuing guidance on EPA-approved monitoring methods.

“EPA has not completed a risk assessment to support its recommendations on chromium-6,” Murray testified. “Neither water systems nor the public have a clear idea of whether minute quantities of chromium-6 represent a health risk, and if so, the nature of that risk. Therefore, utilities are placed in the untenable position of not being able to explain to their customers the relevance of the monitoring that EPA has recommended.”

Other witnesses included Stephen Lewis, city manager of Norman, Oklahoma, who submitted written testimony; Diane VanDe Hei, executive director for the Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies; Linda Birnbaum, director of the National Institutes of Environmental Health Sciences, and Thomas Burke, associate dean for Public Health Practice and Training at John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

AWWA’s written testimony is available at:

[www.awwa.org/files/GovtPublicAffairs/GADocuments/AWWAtestimonyEPWFeb2011.pdf](http://www.awwa.org/files/GovtPublicAffairs/GADocuments/AWWAtestimonyEPWFeb2011.pdf)

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