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| Sismun VI2019 | Flint water crisis  |

**Brief Description of Committee**

In this committee, delegates will be working towards alleviating the situation of residents in both Flint, Michigan and Newark, New Jersey by looking at the history of both their water contamination crises. Delegates are to use this information to determine the proper steps that will be taken in order to finally give the residents of the two cities peace of mind and to potentially address the water contamination on a national level. Delegates are to use this background guide as a starting point and something to refer back to as they write their position paper and prepare their arguments. Delegates should keep in mind that as this is a national issue, they will be acting as a senator who is currently sitting in the U.S Senate. This will very likely mean that several of the senators assigned to delegates may have not had any direct involvement in the Flint crisis, which will allow for more freedom when it comes to making new policies within the committee, but delegates are urged to stay authentic to the senator they are given. It is important to keep in mind that the overall well-being of the Flint and Newark residents should always be at the forefront of the conversation. Solutions do not come easily, so delegates should strive for progress, not perfection. Good luck to all who participate!

**Statement of the Problem (Flint)**

Contamination of Flint, Michigan’s water pipes began in 2014 when the drinking water source for Flint, Michigan was changed from the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department (DWS) to the Flint River. The wanting of a change in water sources for Flint was mainly for the purpose of attempting to save money. Here is a rundown of the events that led up to the eventual contamination of Flint’s water supply and its aftermath. Beginning around June 2012 till April 2013, Flint officials delegated on how they can save money for the city, which is when the idea of switching from the Detroit Water and Sewerage System to a pipeline that could connect Flint to the Karegnondi Water Authority (KWA). As the city waited for the pipeline to be built, they decided on the Flint River as the temporary water source for Flint. In an attempt to ease already growing concerns about the quality of water from the Flint River, the city releases a statement on April 25th, the same day Flint water source is officially switched to Flint River Water. Some of the comments made by Mayor Dayne Walling’s reads as follows: “... 'It's regular, good, pure drinking water, and it's right in our backyard,' said Mayor [Dayne] Walling, "this is the first step in the right direction for Flint, and we take this monumental step forward in controlling the future of our community's most precious resource.' " Residents of Flint complained about the color and smell of the water in May of 2014, but it is not until August 2014 that the bacteria E.coli is discovered in the water which leads to urges for residents to boil their water. Michigan’s Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) reported that the city’s approach to the problem was to increase chlorine levels in the water. On January 2nd, 2015, Flint’s drinking water fails to meet the requirements of the Safe Drinking Water Act because of the high levels of total trihalomethanes (TTHM), a type of disinfection byproducts. Some are known to be possible carcinogens for humans and can lead to cancer. The state’s response to this is to start giving bottled water to its government office employees. On January 21st, 2015, Flint residents came together to discuss how the water is causing their children to fall ill and rashes to appear on their bodies. On February 26th, 2015, the U.S Environmental Protection Agency alerts the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) that tests found that the water in the home LeeAnne Walters, a Flint resident, had 104 parts per billion of lead, which is roughly 7 times the federal action level. This pattern of federal agencies and departments warning the local government of Flint about the dangerous levels of lead present in their water pipes continues on for a while until October 8, 2015 when the Governor of Michigan, Rick Snyder, announces that Flint will stop using Flint River water, and on the 16th of that month, the city of Flint switches back to Detroit's system. Though at this point, citizens have been suffering from the lead in water pipes for over a year, it is not until December 14, 2015, that Flint declares a state of emergency. This is followed by the governor of Michigan declaring a state of emergency in Genesee County on January 4th, 2016 and President Obama doing the same just over a week later. After just about 4 years of Flint having to fight their own local government and at times, even federal government and several lawsuits and criminal charges later, the MDEQ announces in April of 2018 that lead levels in the Flint water supply are no longer a problem and Governor Snyder notifies citizens of Flint that the free bottled water program will end. This, of course, does not by any means guarantee that residents of Flint, Michigan suddenly trust their drinking water, and rightfully so. After years of manipulation at the hands of the government and having their precarious situation be put on the back burner by nearly everyone, it is understandable why it would be so difficult to go back to blindly trusting those who failed them multiple times. Though the fear for lead in the water has, for the most part, diminished, it is the potential of bacteria in water and stagnation that worry residents. This means that despite assurances from the government, Flint residents are still largely dependent on bottled water.

**Statement of the Problem (Newark)**

Though Flint was the first time that many in America questioned the water purity of the water in our pipes, Newark has been dealing with no clean drinking water since 2010. The local government in Newark responded by installing lead- free water lines and fixtures. Now, in 2019, many Newark residents are still struggling to have access to clean drinking water. Officials have found that at least 10% of Newark households had twice the amount of lead in their drinking water than what the U.S EPA considers the margin for taking action. Unlike the Flint case, the lead is leaking into the pipes and is not coming from the source water. In dealing with this crisis, the city of Newark has made numerous errors in properly addressing the situation. Officials did not even begin giving out water filters until 2018 and only developed a corrosion control treatment system until May of 2019. The distribution of bottled water did not get underway until the week of August 26th of 2019. Like in Flint, the negative effects of lead in the water pipes have been felt throughout the community and the negative effects on children are preeminent. Studies have shown that the effects of lead exposure on children range from developing learning disabilities to damage to the central and peripheral nervous system. This, among many, has been a central focal point that residents have tried to bring to the attention of the city, state, and, and government officials in an attempt to alleviate their situations. The city put in place a plan to borrow $120 million to speed the replacement of pipes that have been pinned as the cause for lead in the water on August 26th, 2019. As of now, the timeline for the pipe replacement has been set at 30 months, but it has yet to have any significant effect in the case of those most affected. Now, many still wonder how even after the events that transpired in Flint, Michigan, why it has once again taken government officials so long to prioritize the access of clean drinking water to an entire community.

**Debatable Solutions:**

* Making a community's lack of access to clean water grounds for declaring a national emergency
* Urging the federal government to set up a national fund for already suffering communities
* Lowering the MDEQ standard for lead in part per billion found in water pipes so that action is taken at the first sign of possible lead exposure before it is too late
* Require the federal government to give free medical services to families experiencing negative medical repercussions from lead exposure

**Questions to Consider:**

These are a few talking points that I recommend for delegates to consider addressing the cause for resident’s ongoing suffering and in finding a solution(s)

* How could the local government of Flint have gone about addressing the lead found in its water pipes from its first trace following the switch to Flint River water?
* Why didn’t Newark officials address and act properly following the findings of lead in the water of city schools back in 2010? What could they have done better to abate the situation at the time?
* What could your federal or local governments have done to help the citizens in both Flint and Newark if they were previously involved?
* Who, or what holds the most blame for neglecting the residents of cities for years? (EPA, MDEQ, Flint Government, Michigan Government, National Government)
* Does it seem as though the residents in both neighborhoods’ situations are and were being less prioritized because they are lower-income? What senator or government official actively contributed to this negligence?
* What are the necessary steps that should be taken to ensure that there are no more cases of lead exposure, especially in lower-income neighborhoods?
* How can local officials finally restore the public’s trust in them and their legislation?

**Roles:**

1. Rep. Dan Kildee
2. Rep. Rashida Tlaib
3. Rep. Justin Amash
4. Rep. Bill Huizenga
5. Senator Gary Peters
6. Senator Debbie Stabenow
7. Rep. Donald Payne
8. Rep. Frank Pallone
9. Rep. Josh Gottherimer
10. Rep. Andy KIm
11. Senator Cory Booker
12. Senator Bob Menendez
13. Mayor Ras Baraka.
14. Mayor Karen Weaver
15. Councilman Maurice Davis
16. Councilwoman Kate Fields
17. Councilwoman Monica Galloway
18. Councilman Anibal Ramos
19. Councilman Eddie Osborne
20. Councilman John Sharpe James

**Overall Goal of Simulation**

By the end of this simulation, delegates should have been able to come to a consensus on who should be taking responsibility for the current state of residents in Flint and Newark, and what are the proper steps to be taken to both ensure that residents of both cities are given proper access to clean drinking water and an overall peace of mind that said water is 100 percent lead-free.

In addition, delegates should attempt to create a national framework to stop crises like these from happening in the future, as well as a blueprint for how to respond to these crises more effectively if there is another clean water shortage in the future.

I urge that delegates use this guide and the links listed below to get reach a solution at the end of the simulation. **I can be contacted at** **habiediallo13@gmail.com** **for any inquiries about position papers and the simulation as a whole.**

**Helpful Links**

**Flint**

[**https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2016/04/20/465545378/lead-laced-water-in-flint-a-step-by-step-look-at-the-makings-of-a-crisis**](https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2016/04/20/465545378/lead-laced-water-in-flint-a-step-by-step-look-at-the-makings-of-a-crisis)

[**https://www.post-gazette.com/news/health/2018/10/21/Flint-water-crisis-timeline-contamination-lawsuits-lead-exposure-children/stories/201810170150**](https://www.post-gazette.com/news/health/2018/10/21/Flint-water-crisis-timeline-contamination-lawsuits-lead-exposure-children/stories/201810170150)

[**https://www.michiganradio.org/post/does-flint-have-clean-water-yes-it-s-complicated**](https://www.michiganradio.org/post/does-flint-have-clean-water-yes-it-s-complicated)

**Newark**

[**https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/newark-borrow-120-million-speed-replacement-pipes-blamed-lead-water-n1046431**](https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/newark-borrow-120-million-speed-replacement-pipes-blamed-lead-water-n1046431)

[**https://www.huffpost.com/entry/newark-lead-water-contamination\_n\_5d548d9de4b0d8840fee57c8**](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/newark-lead-water-contamination_n_5d548d9de4b0d8840fee57c8)

[**https://www.npr.org/2019/08/13/750806632/newarks-drinking-water-problem-lead-and-unreliable-filters**](https://www.npr.org/2019/08/13/750806632/newarks-drinking-water-problem-lead-and-unreliable-filters)

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# “Flint Water Crisis Timeline”, *Pittsburgh Post Gazette,* 13, Sept. 2019, <https://www.post-gazette.com/news/health/2018/10/21/Flint-water-crisis-timeline-contamination-lawsuits-lead-exposure-children/stories/201810170150>

# “Does Flint have clean water? Yes, but it’s complicated.”, *Michigan Radio NPR,* 21, Aug. 2019, <https://www.michiganradio.org/post/does-flint-have-clean-water-yes-it-s-complicated>

# “Newark's Drinking Water Problem: Lead And Unreliable Filters”,  *National Public Radio,* 13, Aug. 2019, <https://www.npr.org/2019/08/13/750806632/newarks-drinking-water-problem-lead-and-unreliable-filters>

# “What You Need To Know About The Newark Lead Contamination Crisis”, *HuffPost*, 15, Aug 2019,

<https://www.huffpost.com/entry/newark-lead-water-contamination_n_5d548d9de4b0d8840fee57c8>

“Newark to Borrow $120 million to Speed Replacement of Pipes Blamed for Lead in Water”, *NBC News, 26, Aug. 2019*

[*https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/newark-borrow-120-million-speed-replacement-pipes-blamed-lead-water-n1046431*](https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/newark-borrow-120-million-speed-replacement-pipes-blamed-lead-water-n1046431)