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# Assembly California Legislature



ADAM C. GRAY

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AGING AND LONG-TERM CARE  
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WATER, PARKS, AND WILDLIFE

March 25, 2014

The Honorable Jim DeMartini  
Supervisor  
Stanislaus County  
1010 10<sup>th</sup> St., Suite 6500  
Modesto, CA 95354

**RE: Chromium-6 Maximum Contaminant Level Proposal**

Dear Supervisor DeMartini:

On August 23, 2013, the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) proposed the strictest hexavalent chromium (chromium-6) drinking water standard in the nation. While the US Environmental Protection Agency actually increased the federal maximum contaminant level (MCL) to 100-micrograms per liter ( $\mu\text{g/L}$ ) in 1991, and California has maintained a  $50\mu\text{g/L}$  since 1977, CDPH, following the requirements of SB 351 (Chapter 602, Statutes of 2001), proposed cutting California's chromium-6 MCL to  $10\mu\text{g/L}$ .

In the name of public safety, the CDPH has proposed an MCL which has the potential to infringe on longstanding sources of water, such as wells and aquifers, which communities have utilized for decades. In order to comply with the proposed MCL, the CDPH estimates an additional \$156 million will be added to Californian's water bills annually. And these costs will not be shared equally throughout the state. Our rural communities in the Central Valley have significantly higher percentages of wells with naturally occurring chromium-6 than across the rest of the state. This water also supports communities which face economic challenges such as high unemployment and poverty. Now, as we try to recover from the Great Recession while facing the worst drought in over 100 years, the state is talking about yet another stumbling block we may need to clear.

We need to work together. Chromium-6 is not any one person's problem. Every one of our communities potentially has a well, reservoir, or aquifer that will be effected under these new terms. We need a regional approach to solve this regional problem, and that starts by being prepared for this change.

Every drinking water source needs to be tested and evaluated for chromium-6 contamination so we can know the extent of the problem and exactly which sources need to be treated. The new

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standard applies only to drinking water, so water use transfers among suppliers may play a major role in how to address the problem. Filtration and decontamination can be burdensomely expensive, but cost sharing strategies can relieve significant pressure.

The proposed MCL is not final, but a decision is expected later this year. Even if the CDPH does revise their proposal, we should not expect the 50µg/L standard to stand much longer. Additionally, regulatory authority over drinking water will shift from CDPH to the State Water Resources Control Board sometime in the near future. The West Side must work together if we are to get out in front of this issue, and I encourage every stakeholder to start the conversation now to avoid costly delays and mistakes in the future.

In the coming months, I will reach out to see what assistance I can help provide. If you have any questions before then, please contact my office at 916-319-2021.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'A. Gray', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Adam C. Gray  
Assemblymember

cc: Mr. Stan Risen, Stanislaus County Chief Executive Officer