



LEAGUE OF CONSERVATION VOTERS

To: Interested Parties
From: Gene Karpinski, President, League of Conservation Voters
Date: March 3, 2016
RE: "I Shouldn't Be Commenting on Flint"

Tonight, voters will tune into the Fox News Republican presidential debate in Detroit, Michigan to hear the candidates talk about a range of issues. Given the Flint water crisis, there is no better time for the Republican candidates to be asked about their position on the environment – and how it directly affects Americans.

But if the past 16 GOP presidential debates and forums are any indication, they will once again be let down by Republicans who choose to ignore environmental and climate issues, dismiss the vital EPA programs and regulators who work every day to prevent disasters like Flint from happening, and belittle the indisputable science behind climate change.

The candidates are taking the stage just after the EPA administrator Gina McCarthy visits Flint for the second time and after U.S. Senate Republicans are holding up a bipartisan comprehensive energy bill over their refusal to move forward with a vital federal aid package for Flint.

We need a president like Barack Obama who is prepared to use the tools at their disposal to address problems like Flint on day one - but the GOP presidential candidates have made it clear they want nothing to do with the issue.

Donald Trump, the likely GOP presidential nominee said, "I shouldn't be commenting on Flint," and frequently calls for cutting the EPA, including in the last GOP debate. Sen. Ted Cruz frequently calls the EPA a "lawless agency." And Sen. Marco Rubio wants to abolish the EPA's "crazy rules."

As we head into the debate this evening, here is how the Republican candidates have reacted to the crisis in Flint and how they previously advocated for clean water rules:

- **Frontrunner Donald Trump** [said](#) of Flint, "A thing like that shouldn't happen **but, again, I don't want to comment on that...** They've got a very difficult problem, and I know the governor's got a very difficult time going. But you know, **I shouldn't be commenting on Flint.**" (1/19/2016)
- **Sen. Ted Cruz** is [playing politics](#) with the issue, handing out water bottles but only at right-to-life clinics and recently noting: "**You know, there's an interesting parallel between Flint and New Orleans. Both cities have been governed with one-party government control of far-left Democrats for decades.**" (2/4/16)
- In remarks to the [Detroit News](#), **Sen. Marco Rubio told Michigan voters, "That's not an issue that, right now, we've been focused on...** For me to give you a deeply detailed answer on what the right approach should be on it, other than to tell you, in general, I believe the federal government's role in some of these things are largely limited, unless it involves a federal jurisdictional issue." (1/18/2016)

This comes as a stark contrast to **Hillary Clinton**, who traveled to Flint to see the damage first-hand, and who has used her time in the national spotlight to shed light on this disaster. In fact, her Super Tuesday victory speech called for action in Flint, acknowledging that “there are many other Flints out there, communities that are hurting and need help, but we’ve come too far in this country to let us turn back. We’re going to build on the progress that we’ve made.”

Hillary believes we should use the tools available, including the EPA’s legal authority, to fight for justice in communities small and large – whether they are suffering from the effects of climate change or being poisoned by their drinking water.

Unfortunately, the Republican candidates seem determined to do away with the EPA’s authority and roll back progress made to the Clean Water Act, the law allowing the agency to address problems like the one in Flint:

- **Sen. Marco Rubio would [eliminate](#) “every single one of those crazy EPA rules”** on his first day in office. (1/17/2016)
- **Donald Trump frequently campaigns on cutting the EPA, [including at last week’s debate](#).** He has also gone so far [as to blame EPA](#) for the Flint crisis. (2/25/2016, 1/25/2016)
- **Sen. Ted Cruz has [called](#) the EPA a “radical” agency**, calling on the states to, “press back using every tool they have available... We’ve got to rein in a lawless executive that is abusing its power.” And in [November](#), Sen. Cruz authored a Senate Resolution calling for, “the EPA to rewrite its Waters of the United States rule.” (2/26/2016) (11/4/2015)

Separately, Ohio Gov. John Kasich is facing his own water quality problems in Sebring, Ohio. Residents [were told](#) of a contamination over two months after the Kasich administration first identified excessive levels of lead in the town of Sebring’s (OH) public water system.

Over the next two weeks, voters in North Carolina, Florida, and Ohio will return to the polls for the first time after three of the hottest years recorded, as well as the most historic six months of progress ever in the environmental movement. We finalized the Clean Power Plan, rejected the Keystone XL pipeline, brought nearly 200 nations to an unprecedented international climate agreement in Paris, extended vitally important wind and solar tax credits to U.S. businesses, and imposed a moratorium on new coal-leasing on public lands.

The Republican candidates barely address – and often oppose – this progress. Tonight, we want to see the candidates asked about their positions and have a much-needed robust discussion on how to protect Americans and our environment.

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