

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Use your influence for safe drinking water

Editor:

On June 25, a formal notice appeared in The Daily Chronicle titled "Pollution Variance." Its technical jargon masked the fact that the City of DeKalb has filed for an extension of a 1991 variance. This variance allows the City to distribute drinking water found to be in violation of the Federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) standards for safe drinking water due to radium contamination.

In order to take the necessary steps to correct the problem, the City was granted a five-year variance by the Illinois Pollution Control board (IPCB) at that time. The City did not take these steps. Although the City spent thousands of dollars for studies to develop a radium removal plan as stipulated by the IPCB, no viable plan emerged as required.

Now the City is asking for a second five-year variance which, in

effect, would again exempt it from removing the radium. Radium has made DeKalb's water unsafe. Radium is a cancer-causing, radioactive substance which seeks bone in a manner similar to calcium. Studies have shown that young children are particularly vulnerable.

The city must correct the contamination, not just apply for another variance. It is time for the city to take action or be held accountable for exceeding the recommended federal levels. Because the city did not uphold its agreement with the IPCB in the first variance, there is no reason to believe it will change now.

DeKalb citizens who wish to comment on the City's non-compliance and wish to object to the second exemption, Variance PCB/96-246, may do several things:

■ Present comments on health concerns and cancer risks at a public hearing of the Illinois Pollution Control Board (IPCB) which is in the process of being scheduled for DeKalb. Interested persons may read letters or attend the proceedings

to obtain information. The time and place for the hearing will be published.

■ Send short comments in writing to the Illinois EPA, Mr. Stephen C. Ewart, Div. of Legal Counsel, IEPA, 2200 Churchill Road, P.O. Box 19276, Springfield, IL 62794-9276.

■ Letters should also be sent to the Illinois Pollution Control Board, Ms. Dorothy Gum, Clerk, State of Illinois Center, 100 West Randolph St., Suite 11-500, Chicago, IL 60601. It is necessary to send a letter to both the SPA and the IPCB as they are separate agencies. Please keep copies of all letters for the IPCB hearing.

The people of DeKalb have the opportunity to influence the long-term health risk of their water. This influence can be accomplished by objecting to the issuance of the variance through letters and by demanding the clean water which is promised under the Safe Drinking Water Act.

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DeKalb