



Press Release...

from State Representative La Shawn K. Ford

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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LEGISLATORS SEEK OVERRIDE OF DRINKING WATER BILL THAT HELPS POORER SUBURBS

CHICAGO – Governor Rauner has vetoed legislation (Senate Bill 2376) designed to help economically disadvantaged Cook County communities fix their troubled drinking water infrastructures. The sponsors of the bill, Senator Napoleon Harris, D-Harvey, and Rep. La Shawn K. Ford, D-Chicago, said they will seek an override of the veto during the General Assembly’s fall session starting November 13.

The Chicago Tribune wrote a major investigative story on October 25, 2017 finding that Ford Heights residents pay nearly six times more for the same amount of water than residents of the wealthy, predominantly white town of Highland Park. Ford Heights taxpayers pay four times more for water than people living in Chicago. Ford Heights is not alone and similar problems exist in Harvey and Maywood, according to the Tribune.

Ford Heights’ 2,800 residents must access their drinking water from Lake Michigan through both Hammond, Indiana and Chicago Heights, Illinois, while other communities in Cook County get water directly from Lake Michigan. Of the 10 towns with the highest water rates, five, or 50 percent, are majority-black towns, the Tribune found.

Besides the high rates, more than 25 billion gallons of water drawn from Lake Michigan was lost in the Chicago area in 2016, an analysis by the Tribune found. Eight towns surveyed by the Tribune — Hometown, East Hazel Crest, Posen, Burnham, Riverdale, Flossmoor, Lyons and Maywood — lost more than 30 percent of their water.

The legislation would set up a drinking water grant program under the Illinois EPA to fix aging water pipes and damage in Ford Heights, Maywood, Harvey and other towns. The bill prioritizes communities that don’t have access to Lake Michigan water.

“The smaller Cook County suburbs don’t have the funds to fix their infrastructure and it’s nearly impossible for them to qualify for Illinois Environmental Protection Agency loan programs,” Senator Harris said. “I will seek a veto override to make sure Ford Heights, Harvey and other towns are first in line when capital funds become available.”

Rep. Ford said, “This legislation prioritized minority suburban communities with water problems over wealthier towns with direct access to Lake Michigan. The governor missed a chance to help tens of thousands of people get clean and affordable drinking water, but I believe we can override his veto.”

For more information, please contact Rep. Ford’s district office at 773-378-5902 or visit www.LaShawnFord.com.

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