



May 1, 2008

Dear Citizens' Save Our Sewer and Water,

The Mayor of Akron has recently proposed privatizing the city's wastewater system in hopes of providing more opportunity for education in the community. And while the value and importance of education cannot be overstated, the dangers of water privatization are not stated often enough. Many communities have regretted handing over their water services to private companies, and their stories should give the city of Akron pause in considering doing so.

From Felton, California to Lexington, Kentucky, communities across the country have sought to regain public control of local water utilities that were poorly managed by private companies. Cities from Atlanta, Georgia to Laredo, Texas have ended contracts with private water companies, demonstrating that water privatization is risky in cities and towns of all sizes.

These and other communities have found that privatizing their water systems was more burdensome than beneficial. For many, privatization resulted in poorer service, fewer jobs, higher water rates, and less local control of their utility. And while some communities like Stockton, California have successfully wrested control of their utility from private companies, others continue to struggle against difficult odds to regain public control.

Public utilities are better poised than private companies to offer efficient, reliable, and responsible service. Currently, 86% of Americans receive their water from publicly owned systems. And whereas private corporations are ultimately accountable to shareholders, public utilities are accountable to the residents of a community.

Food & Water Watch supports the continued public ownership and management of Akron's water systems. Furthermore, because it is crucial that decisions about public water resources be accompanied by lively and inclusive public discussion and deliberation, Food & Water Watch supports the current initiative effort by Citizens' Save Our Sewer and Water to put any water privatization contract to a public vote.

Food & Water Watch has years of experience working on the issue of water privatization in communities like Akron. I urge local residents and public officials to examine the stories of those who have traveled the water privatization route and discovered firsthand the risks involved. You will find that water is much too precious a resource, and sewer operation much too valuable a service, to be handed over to a private corporation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "W. Hauter".

Wenonah Hauter  
Executive Director  
Food & Water Watch