

JUNE 15, 2004

SCHAKOWSKY TO BUSH ADMINISTRATION ONCE AGAIN:

***EPA MUST FORCE MILWAUKEE TO
CLEAN UP ITS ACT -
EXCESSIVE DUMPING OF RAW SEWAGE THREATENS LAKE MICHIGAN AND FORCES
CLOSURE OF CHICAGO BEACHES***

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Following the closing of many beaches in her Congressional District, U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) [once again](#) called on the Bush Administration to take immediate action to protect Chicago beaches from raw sewage being dumped into Lake Michigan by the City of Milwaukee.

In a letter to Thomas Skinner, Acting Administrator for Enforcement at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Schakowsky wrote: *"I am disappointed that it has taken the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) over two years to acknowledge the seriousness of the problem, which I first brought to the agency's attention on [May 24, 2002](#)*

. "The EPA must act immediately to carry out its duty to enforce the Clean Water Act to protect Lake Michigan, the public health of my constituents, and their right to enjoy Illinois' beaches."

Schakowsky added that EPA has done little over the past two years to bring pressure on the city of Milwaukee *"to clean up its act,"* and called on Skinner *".to immediately follow through on your statement earlier this month that the EPA will consider fining Milwaukee for the 4.6 billion gallons of sewage that the city dumped into Lake Michigan in May this year."*

She concluded, *"I request that you provide me with a detailed plan of action that you will take, including a proposed timeline, to ensure that Milwaukee abides by the Clean Water Act. I would also like you to provide me with an explanation as to why the EPA has waited for years to carry out its duties on this important matter."*

Schakowsky is a member of the Subcommittee on Environment and Hazardous Waste. Below is the full text of Schakowsky's letter sent today to Administrator Skinner. ([Read](#)

[Schakowsky's May 24, 2002 letter to former EPA Administrator Christine Todd Whitman](#)

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June 15, 2004

Mr. Thomas Skinner
Acting Administrator for Enforcement
Environmental Protection Agency
Ariel Rios Building
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Mr. Skinner,

I am writing to you about the recent beach closings in the Chicago area, several of which are in my district, that are due in large part to the excessive dumping of raw sewage by the City of Milwaukee into Lake Michigan. I am disappointed that it has taken the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) over two years to acknowledge the seriousness of the problem, which I first brought to the agency's attention on May 24, 2002. The EPA must act immediately to carry out its duty to enforce the Clean Water Act to protect Lake Michigan, the public health of my constituents, and their right to enjoy Illinois' beaches.

In my 2002 letter to your agency, I pointed out that there is evidence to suggest that sewage overflows from Milwaukee are responsible for the deteriorating beach health conditions in Illinois. I asked that the EPA act on its responsibility to enforce the Clean Water Act to limit the dangerous amounts of sewage that Milwaukee discharges into Lake Michigan every year. At the time I wrote to your agency, the number of beach closings in Illinois had risen from 10 in 1994 to 399. The official beach season has only just begun and already dozens of Chicago's beaches have been closed because of dangerous levels of E. coli bacteria. Clearly, there has been no improvement in this situation and EPA still has yet to act.

I urge you to immediately follow through on your statement earlier this month that the EPA will consider fining Milwaukee for the 4.6 billion gallons of sewage that the city dumped into Lake Michigan in May this year. However, you also asserted that penalties alone will not solve what is now a chronic problem. I agree with you that it will take "pressure from the federal government to get the (Milwaukee) system to do what they need to do."

The EPA is now over two years late in bringing that pressure on the city of Milwaukee to clean up its act. I urge you to stop delaying your action and to protect the health and wellbeing of my constituents. I request that you provide me with a detailed plan of action that you will take, including a proposed timeline, to ensure that Milwaukee abides by the Clean Water Act. I would also like you to provide me with an explanation as to

why the EPA has waited for years to carry out its duties on this important matter.

Thank you for your attention to my concerns. I look forward to your timely reply.

Sincerely,

Jan Schakowsky

Member of Congress