



FACTS: Water Infrastructure and Open Competition

H.R. 5310 would ensure that federally funded infrastructure projects require open, competitive bidding procedures for all materials. 'Open Competition' is a common sense policy that will allow local officials to consider multiple technologies for infrastructure projects and make the best decision for their community based on performance and cost effectiveness, maximizing the use of taxpayer dollars and lowering prices for consumers.

Some groups have been making misleading claims about water infrastructure and open competition.

Here are the facts:



CLAIM: H.R. 5310 is an attempt to put policies in place that will favor plastic pipes over other piping materials for water infrastructure projects.



FACT: The bill is simple in what it does — it allows project engineers to consider all materials and select the best option based on merit that works for their project. The legislation is not material-specific and gives no preferential treatment to any single pipe material. The bill makes clear that the final decision on material selection rests with the local project engineers.



CLAIM: This legislation fails to recognize there are key differences between pipe materials.



FACT: This legislation does not imply that all materials are equal. The legislation recognizes that each project is different and various materials will be suitable for various projects. Furthermore, the legislation reaffirms that final material selection decisions are ultimately up to the project engineer(s). The fact that there are performance differences across materials is exactly why open competition is a valuable tool.



CLAIM: The legislation will likely lead to a significant increase in bid protests and litigation.



FACT: Many cities and counties large and small have opened up the bidding process for infrastructure projects and have not been burdened by excessive bid protest or litigation. For example, no state that received grants and loans in 2016 for water infrastructure projects from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, which requires open competition for piping materials, saw any challenges.



CLAIM: Plastic pipes easily break in extreme weather and do not last as long as other piping materials.



FACT: Plastic pipes have a comparable life expectancy to other piping materials, including ductile iron. Studies by Utah State University's Buried Structure Laboratory and Jana Laboratories showed that plastic pipes have a service life that should exceed 100 years. The Utah study found plastic pipes to have an extremely low water main break-rate and pipes installed 50 years ago still meet all applicable standards.



CLAIM: There is no federal government oversight on the certification of standards for plastic piping, so plastic pipes are not being tested for safety by the government.



FACT: As directed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, all piping materials, including plastic piping, must meet the rigorous standards set by National Sanitation Foundation (NSF) to be considered for use in drinking water. All plastic pipes must be certified that they meet the safety standard NSF/American National Standards Institute (ANSI) Standard 61.



CLAIM: Plastic pipes leach toxic chemicals into the water that runs through them.



FACT: All plastic pipe materials used in drinking water systems must be certified to meet or exceed NSF/ANSI 61—Drinking Water System Components – Health Effects. One aspect of these requirements requires rigorous testing for a wide range of chemical substances. NSF's test methods are capable of detecting contaminants in water at microscopic levels.



CLAIM: There are no examples of where plastic pipes were used to replace older materials.



FACT: Plastic pipes are replacing older materials across the country. Burton, Michigan, a town near Flint, saved millions of dollars utilizing plastic pipes for updating its water system. Furthermore, Arlington National Cemetery used plastic pipes to replace underground water infrastructure. Plastic pipe was used because it could be installed using trenchless technology, without disturbing the graves of fallen soldiers.

H.R. 5310 will give communities more options and make it easier for project managers to select the best materials when it comes to fixing their water systems.

