



**GREAT LAKES AND ST. LAWRENCE**  
CITIES INITIATIVE  
**L'ALLIANCE DES VILLES**  
DES GRANDS LACS ET DU SAINT-LAURENT

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## Milwaukee Mayor Cavalier Johnson and Mayors from eleven other Midwest cities, along with EPA and state officials, take part in Lead Line Removal and Water Equity field hearing

**MILWAUKEE, September 16, 2022** – Mayors from twelve Midwest cities, including Milwaukee Mayor Cavalier Johnson and Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot, along with EPA and state officials, met in Milwaukee for a field hearing regarding the best approaches to lead line removal and water equity in Great Lakes Cities and how to safeguard the new infrastructure law’s transformative potential.

“Mayors will play a crucial role in determining whether historic federal investments in water infrastructure via the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) lead to transformative results on the ground, including in disadvantaged communities that have often struggled to access federal dollars,” said Milwaukee Mayor Cavalier Johnson, who is also Co-Chair of the Mayors Commission on Water Equity.

“The Commission is appreciative of EPA and states’ efforts to support implementation of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, but more must be done to ensure Great Lakes cities are able to access federal dollars for water infrastructure and sustain progress in addressing water-equity priorities, including lead service line replacement.”

To promote the equitable implementation of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, the Commission recommends that EPA and states:

- Incorporate lead service line estimates into a new state needs assessment in order to ensure Great Lakes states receive their fair share of IIJA funds from EPA.
- Expand technical assistance to cities from EPA to ensure all communities may complete lead service line inventories and submit competitive grant applications.

- Increase access to principal-forgiveness loans by adapting state definitions of disadvantaged communities to include underserved and low-income neighborhoods nested within highly populated cities.

Most of all, the Commission emphasized the necessity of collaboration among mayors, EPA, and state officials in order to identify implementation barriers, propose solutions, and deliver water infrastructure across Great Lakes cities.

“This is a historic moment, with the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act providing \$15 billion for lead service line replacement,” stated Mayor McKinney of Zion, Illinois, who also serves as the Chair of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative. “This landmark law has the potential to provide widespread access to safe, clean, and affordable water for the first time in our country’s history, but this potential could be squandered without purposeful dialogue and meaningful collaboration among implementing partners, including Great Lakes mayors.”

A recent report on blood lead levels in U.S. children by the medical journal [JAMA Pediatrics](#) finds that more than half of the one million children under age six tested had detectable levels of lead in their blood, uncovering a toxin that can impact pregnant women, nursing mothers, and children. Lead service lines were among the sources cited as posing a health risk to humans and, according to credible independent analyses, they are heavily concentrated in the eight states comprising the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Basin.

“The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law is the largest ever federal investment in water infrastructure, including in lead service line replacement,” noted Karen Dettmer, Managing Director for Infrastructure Implementation at EPA’s Office of Water. “With this funding, EPA, states, and our municipal partners have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity not to just build and rebuild, but to build for the future – and we will be with communities every step of the way.”

“When we come together, we can achieve big things – and thanks to the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, we can achieve big things in Great Lakes cities,” remarked Debra Shore, Regional Administrator for EPA Region 5. “I am looking forward to working in close collaboration with the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative and the Mayors Commission on Water Equity to ensure we deliver on the infrastructure law's potential to transform our region's water infrastructure.”

*The Mayors Commission on Water Equity is part of The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative, founded in 2003 as a binational organization led by a coalition of mayors working collaboratively to restore and protect the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Basin for the benefit of our communities and future generations. With more than 175-member municipalities, the Cities Initiative is the largest municipally-driven organization in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Basin.*

*For more information about this event, including a video recording, please visit:  
<https://glslcities.org/events/one-water-summit-september-15-2022/>.*

*This event is organized in partnership with the U.S. Water Alliance and the Environmental Policy Innovation Center (EPIC).*

### **Hearing Participants**

Mayor Cavalier Johnson, Milwaukee, WI  
Mayor Lori Lightfoot, Chicago, IL  
Mayor Billy McKinney, Zion, IL  
Mayor Daniel Biss, Evanston, IL  
Mayor Frank Whitfield, Elyria, OH  
Mayor Jack Bradley, Lorain, OH  
Mayor Marcus Muhammad, Benton Harbor, MI  
Mayor Ken Johnson, Muskegon, MI  
Mayor Bill Bazzi, Dearborn Heights, MI  
Mayor Joe Schember, Erie, PA  
Mayor Malik Evans, Rochester, NY  
Mayor Ryan Sorenson, Sheboygan, WI

Karen Dettmer, Managing Director for Infrastructure Implementation, Office of Water, U.S. EPA  
Debra Shore, Regional Administrator, EPA Region 5  
Kelly Green, Administrator of Water Infrastructure Financing, Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy (EGLE)  
Casey Sweeney, Program and Policy Analyst in Community Financial Assistance Bureau, Wisconsin DNR  
Jay Patel, SRF Program Manager, Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection

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### **FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:**

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