

Senate Hearing: Arsenic in Drinking Water Senator Boxer



October 12, 2000 Boxer/Baucus Amendment No. 4308, to strike the riders that delay the Environmental Protection Agency's new standard on arsenic in drinking water.

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1 in every 100 people who drink water containing arsenic at the current standard may well develop cancer –
Senator Boxer

What do scientists and health experts say about the dangers of arsenic? According to a National Academy of Sciences report, arsenic in water is known to cause cancer of the lungs, skin, and bladder. The National Academy of Sciences study and other studies also found that arsenic in drinking water may cause kidney and liver cancer. Arsenic is also known to cause other severe problems, including toxicity to the central and peripheral nervous system, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, skin lesions, and could cause birth defects and reproductive problems. Here is the national shocker. The National Academy of Sciences estimates that 1 in every 100 people who drink water containing arsenic at the current standard may well develop cancer caused by arsenic. This is a cancer risk that is 10,000 times higher than the cancer risk EPA allows in food.

The National Resources Defense Council analyzed EPA's base data, and they looked at 25 States serving approximately 100 million Americans. They found that approximately half of those Americans are drinking water with arsenic levels that could cause 1 in 100 of them to develop cancer.

The arsenic levels in those systems meet the EPA's outdated 50 parts per billion standard. As the NAS has said, the outdated standard 'does not achieve EPA's goal for public health protection and requires revision as promptly as possible.'

Let me repeat that. This is science. They base these rules on science. The sciences say set the standard at a lower level as soon as possible.

In this rider we push the date back. It is a delay. I think it is a dangerous delay.

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Call me old fashioned, but I think when you play around with the arsenic levels in drinking water, it deserves to have the light of day.
– Senator Boxer