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Public Health Service

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MISINTERPRETATION OF "SAFE DRINKING WATER ACT"

Public Law 93-523, December 16, 1974

The purpose of this law is "to assure that water supply systems serving the public meet minimum national standards for protection of public health."* One of the requirements of the law is for the Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), to prescribe a maximum level for contaminants which may have an adverse effect on the health of persons.

The following statement, which has been misinterpreted by some opponents of fluoridation as a basis for banning fluoridation, is contained in the law:

"No national primary drinking water regulation may require the addition of any substance for preventive health care purposes unrelated to contamination of drinking water."

The report of the House Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce clearly indicates that there is no intention to ban the proven public health measure of fluoridation. It states:

"Limitation on standard setting authority

"The Administrator under this section would be prohibited from requiring the addition of any substances other than for the purpose of treating contaminants. Thus, EPA could not require the addition of fluorides or other substances to a public water system for medicinal purposes. Nor

*Report #93-1185 from Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce to House of Representatives, July 10, 1974.

could EPA prevent the addition of fluorides or other substances up to the maximum amount allowable under a maximum contaminant level. While EPA could not require the addition of a substance for medicinal purposes, the Agency would have full authority to limit the addition of such a substance from interfering with the effectiveness of any required treatment techniques."

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