

From: Doug Young
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To: Haley, Nikki
Cc: Senator Thomas Alexander; sandiferbill@bellsouth.net
Subject: The awkward question about Flint that no one wants to answer & 'I let you down.' Michigan governor apologizes for Flint water crisis, says he'll release emails

Governor Haley – I hope someone in Columbia is paying attention to the events in Flint, Michigan. You do not want to have to deal with a disaster like this.

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[<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2016/01/20/the-awkward-question-about-flint-that-no-one-wants-to-answer/>](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2016/01/20/the-awkward-question-about-flint-that-no-one-wants-to-answer/)

The awkward question about Flint that no one wants to answer

Nobody should have to deal with water crisis: Flint Mayor

Flint does not look much like the rest of the state of Michigan, or even the average American city its size.

More than four in ten of its residents live in poverty. A majority of them are African-American. Their homes are worth about one-third of typical houses in Michigan, and the families get by on about half as much income.

This picture, the city's new mayor believes, helps explain why state officials were slow to respond to a long-building water crisis in which thousands of Flint children may have been exposed to toxic levels of lead — even well after residents first began to cry about the city's murky water.

"Would this happen in a different community?" Mayor Karen Weaver asked, as she attended a national conference of the country's mayors in Washington on Wednesday, after meeting with the president. Her city, she points out, has high unemployment (9.7 percent). It's been governed by a state-appointed emergency manager. It's the kind of place that garners little attention and few favors.

If the poor and minorities tend to wield less political power in America, here was a whole city of them, 70 miles north of Detroit.

"It's a minority community, it's a poor community, and our voices were not heard," Weaver told reporters. "And that's part of the problem."

Her comments echoed a provocative jab by Hillary Clinton in the final Democratic debate on Saturday night. "I'll tell you what," Clinton said, "if the kids in a rich suburb of Detroit had been drinking contaminated water and being bathed in it, there would've been action."

The problems in Flint began nearly two years ago, in April 2014, when the city began to draw its water from the Flint River to save money. Residents immediately began to complain about the look and smell of the water, and last year researchers at Virginia Tech confirmed that lead was present in water samples at rates that could cause kidney damage and neurological problems in children <<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2016/01/15/this-is-how-toxic-flints-water-really-is/>>.

Still, Michigan's Republican governor Rick Snyder did not declare a state of emergency in Flint until Jan. 5 of this year. He didn't mobilize National Guard troops to help distribute water until a week later.

Weaver's question — and, by extension, Clinton's — is less about whether another community might have similarly fallible infrastructure, but whether the rest of us would be willing to leave it unaddressed for so long. Flint's health risk has been apparent for more than a year, but equally importantly, people who live there have been asking for help for just as long.

"We have been crying about this for what will be two years in April, and that's what we want to know: What took so long?" Weaver asked. "Because it didn't take a scientist to tell us that brown water is not good."

That's a fair, if awkward, question to ask. American history is full of environmental injustice: poor communities saddled with landfills or singled out for toxic neighbors next door. It's not a conspiracy theory to worry they might also get a slower cleanup.

As for herself, Weaver says she and her husband stopped drinking the local water back in 2014, as soon as the city switched from the Detroit system (she wasn't elected until this past November). "It's sad that I would say 'thank God my kids are grown and not there,'" she says, "but everybody can't say that, and we shouldn't have to say that."

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<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2016/01/20/michigan-governor-apologizes-for-flint-water-crisis-says-he-will-release-emails/>>

‘I let you down.’ Michigan governor apologizes for Flint water crisis, says

he'll release emails

By [Mark Berman <http://www.washingtonpost.com/people/mark-berman>](http://www.washingtonpost.com/people/mark-berman)
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Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder apologized to the residents of Flint for a water crisis that has prompted outrage, federal scrutiny and lawsuits, vowing to seek long-term assistance for the city's residents.

In his State of the State address on Tuesday night, Snyder said he was asking state lawmakers for \$28 million to help residents reeling after Flint's drinking water became contaminated with [dangerously high levels of lead](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2016/01/15/this-is-how-toxic-flints-water-really-is/) [<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2016/01/15/this-is-how-toxic-flints-water-really-is/>](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2016/01/15/this-is-how-toxic-flints-water-really-is/). He also vowed to release his emails related to Flint from 2014 and 2015.

"To you, the people of Flint, I want to say tonight, as I have before, I am sorry, and I will fix it," Snyder, [a Republican elected in 2010](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2016/01/19/meet-rick-snyder-the-governor-at-the-center-of-the-flint-water-crisis/) [<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2016/01/19/meet-rick-snyder-the-governor-at-the-center-of-the-flint-water-crisis/>](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2016/01/19/meet-rick-snyder-the-governor-at-the-center-of-the-flint-water-crisis/) and reelected in 2014, said during his speech, one of multiple times he addressed Flint residents and expressed contrition.

In April 2014, Flint stopped getting its water from Detroit and began using water from the Flint River. Residents quickly began complaining of water that smelled or was discolored. Flint began getting water from Detroit again in October http://www.mlive.com/news/flint/index.ssf/2015/10/flint_reconnecting_to_detroit.html, but by that time some residents had been drinking the water for 19 months.