

**American Public Health Association
National Association of Boards of Local Health
National Association of County and City Health Officials
Physicians for Social Responsibility**

October 18, 2007

Dear Senator:

On behalf of our members and supporters across the nation, we urge you to cosponsor S. 2080, the Sewage Overflow Right-to-Know Act. We strongly support this legislation and look forward to seeing it enacted this Congress.

Every year, billions of gallons of raw and partially treated sewage flow into our rivers, lakes, and coastal waters. Unknowingly, many Americans and their families risk serious illness when these spills contaminate the water they use for recreation or drinking. The bacteria, viruses and parasites found in untreated sewage can cause violent and unpleasant short-term symptoms including gastrointestinal problems, infections and fever, as well as serious chronic conditions such as heart, liver or kidney failure, arthritis and cancer. Certain groups such as children, the elderly, and those with a weakened immune system are particularly vulnerable to these long-term effects.

The Environmental Protection Agency estimates that there are 7.1 million mild-to-moderate cases and 560,000 moderate-to-severe cases of infectious waterborne diseases in the United States every year. However, these numbers could be much higher because many people that get sick from untreated sewage aren't aware of the cause of their illness and don't report it to their doctor or health official. The Sewage Overflow Right-to-Know Act will provide a critical first line of defense against waterborne diseases by requiring public notification of sewage spills. It is critical that public health officials and the larger public receive warning of sewage pollution when these spills have the potential to affect public health.

All people deserve clean water free of the many dangerous pollutants found in sewage. Until we make significant progress towards reducing sewage in our water, there must be strong public notification programs that will alert people when there is a danger of coming into contact with raw sewage. We again thank you for your attention to this issue and urge you to cosponsor S. 2080, the Sewage Overflow Right-to-Know Act.

Sincerely,

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