

Civil Rights Leaders Call for Halt to Water Fluoridation

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Press Release from Fluoride Action Network - Contacts:

[Daniel G. Stockin](#), MPH,
The Lillie Center, Inc
706-669-0786

[Bill Osmunson](#), DDS, MPH
Fluoride Action Network
Cell 425-466-0100 (Pacific Time)

Because fluoride can disproportionately harm poor citizens and black families, Atlanta civil rights leaders, Andrew Young and Dr. Gerald Durley, have asked Georgia legislators to repeal the state's mandatory water fluoridation law.

Andrew Young, former U.N. Ambassador and former Atlanta Mayor, along with Reverend Dr. Gerald Durley, Pastor of Providence Baptist Church in Atlanta, both inductees in the International Civil Rights Walk of Fame, expressed concerns about the fairness, safety, and full disclosure regarding fluoridation in letters to the state's minority and majority legislative leaders. (1,2)

Fluoride chemicals, added to 96% of Georgia's public drinking water supplies are meant to prevent tooth decay, especially in the poor. Yet, 61% of low-income Georgia third-graders have tooth decay compared to 51% from higher income families - and 33% and 20%, respectively, have untreated cavities showing a dire need for dental care. (3)

"We also have a cavity epidemic today in our inner cities that have been fluoridated for decades," wrote Ambassador Young.

Studies show that despite fluoridation, tooth decay is higher in blacks (4) along with fluoride overexposure symptoms - dental fluorosis or discolored teeth.(5)

Dr. Durley wrote, "The National Research Council (NRC) of the National Academy of Sciences has designated kidney patients, diabetics, seniors, and babies as 'susceptible subpopulations' that are especially vulnerable to harm from ingested fluorides. Black citizens are disproportionately affected by kidney disease and diabetes, and are therefore more impacted by fluorides."(4)

Ambassador Young wrote, "I am most deeply concerned for poor families who have babies: if they cannot afford unfluoridated water for their babies' milk formula, do their babies not count? Of course they do. This is an issue of fairness, civil rights, and compassion. We must find better ways to prevent cavities, such as helping those most at risk for cavities obtain access to the services of a dentist."(5)

Dr. Durley's letter to the legislators also says, "I support the holding of Fluoridegate hearings at the state and national level so we can learn why we haven't been openly told that fluorides build up in the body over time (and) why our government agencies haven't told the black community openly that fluorides disproportionately harm black Americans..."

An American Association for Justice Newsletter for trial lawyers describes potential fluoride legal actions based on personal injury, consumer fraud, and civil rights harm.(6)

In a letter to their state's Health Commissioner, a bipartisan group of Tennessee legislators expressed their concern about fluoridation's undesirable impact on babies and other groups.(7)

A bipartisan group of New York City Council Members has also introduced legislation to stop fluoridation in NYC. (8)

Daniel G. Stockin of The Lillie Center Inc., a Georgia-based firm working to end the practice of fluoridation says, "You can look for even more leaders and persons harmed by fluoridation to speak out now." The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) proposes to lower water fluoride levels to alleviate

the growing dental fluorosis epidemic. The Fluoride Action Network (FAN) [submitted scientific evidence to HHS](#) (9) indicating that fluoridation must stop completely to preserve health, documenting that:

- HHS has failed to consider fluoride's impact on the brain. Fluoride has been linked to lowered IQ in 24 human studies, and over 100 animal studies have reported damage to the brain.
- Infants who are fed formula made with fluoridated tap water will receive up to 175 times more fluoride than breast-fed infants. Infants 0-6 months old, the smallest and most vulnerable in our population, were completely excluded from risk calculations in HHS's proposal.
- African-American children and low-income children suffer from the highest rates of dental fluorosis, including the most severe forms of the condition. The HHS has failed to take any steps to redress this inequity, thereby making fluoridation an Environmental Justice issue.

Young stated, "My father was a dentist. I formerly was a strong believer in the benefits of water fluoridation for preventing cavities. But many things that we began to do 50 or more years ago we now no longer do, because we have learned further information that changes our practices and policies. So it is with fluoridation."

Paul Connett, PhD, Director of FAN says "Fluoridation is unnecessary, unethical, the benefits wildly exaggerated and the risks minimized."

References:

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