



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

David Carlucci

## Senator Carlucci Calls on State Department of Health to Test Suez's Water from Lake DeForest

SENATOR DAVID CARLUCCI November 14, 2019

| ISSUE: **CLEAN DRINKING WATER**



(**New City, NY**) – Senator David Carlucci (D-Rockland/Westchester) announced on Wednesday that the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) will test the water from the Lake DeForest reservoir after he expressed residents' concerns.

Suez Water New York supplies drinking water from the reservoir to about 100,000 Rockland County customers. Recently, hundreds of customers have contacted Senator Carlucci and

taken to social media about the disgusting taste and odor of the water.

“My office has gotten many calls from people afraid to drink the water and give it to their children or pets,” said Senator David Carlucci. “Out of an abundance of caution, I called on the State DOH to test the water and give our residents some peace of mind. The State DOH said they will test the water immediately to make sure there is no harmful bacteria or dangerous microcystin toxins. I thank them for their partnership and response to this situation and expect they will share the results with my office.”

Suez and the Rockland County Health Department have said the water is safe to drink. However, Suez admits it may have an earthy flavor. The water company attributes the problem to algae blooms in Lake DeForest, and said to help mitigate the problem they worked with the State Department of Environmental Conservation to apply two rounds of copper sulfate.

At a press conference with residents on Wednesday, Senator Carlucci reiterated that any cost to fix this problem should not be passed on to customers.

“Customers should be issued a credit on their water bill because they cannot use the water they are paying for,” said Carlucci. “Suez is seeking a rate hike of just over 18%, which is offensive, and yet we see here they can’t even invest in preventing these problems. I ask that residents sign my petition in support of a credit on their bills.”

The Public Utility Law Project of New York is leading the fight against Suez on the rate hike case, which is now before the Public Service Commission.

“PULP joins Senator Carlucci in calling for objective third- party testing to ensure Suez’s water is safe to drink,” said Rosa Maria Castillo-Kesper, Director of Operations for the Public Utility Law Project of New York, a consumer watchdog group. “As Suez is seeking a major

rate increase and a merger where consumer benefits seem unlikely to result, we urge the company to focus on prudent investment to make sure its infrastructure is up to the task of providing safe and adequate water for Rockland's consumers, and we call upon the PSC to investigate the company's management and operations of its water divisions.”

Currently, Suez is seeking to raise rates in Rockland County by 18.6% over three years or about \$10.50 a month. This is in addition to average increases of close to 9% per year, and in addition to charges for the failed desalination plant. In 2018, Suez's corporate tax was slashed by the federal government from 35 percent to 21 percent, affording the company a windfall in profits. According to a 2017 report from the New York State Comptroller's Office, Suez charged the highest average monthly rate of any water system in the State.

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