

Presented by Jess Grable to the Port Angeles City Council October 21, 2008 during the public comment period.

My name is Jess Grable and I would not be here using time you need to solve other dire problems IF I had been accorded the right to vote on fluoridation. I paraphrase from a letter sent by the public health dental coordinator of the health office of the state of Florida to the St. Petersburg Inner City Governmental Relations director:

- (1) We offer you federal grant money to fund your fluoridation process.
- (2) Approach community officials individually. Better yet have someone they know and respect convince them (a) of the benefits of fluoridation and (b) of their responsibility as community officials to provide the most cost-effective public health measures available.
- (3) Be aware of how each commissioner will vote. Don't push the issue unless you're sure the majority will vote yes. In some instances it's better to wait until a commissioner has left and been replaced by someone in favor of fluoridation.
- (4) Avoid a referendum. Statistics are that 3 out of 4 fluoridation referenda fail.

I believe that you followed a similar process to accomplish fluoridation in May of 2003 right down to avoiding referendum! This letter is pertinent because (1) interestingly enough, most fluoride originates in Florida and (2) presenting a problem without a solution does not offer a benefit. I will return to this latter statement later in my presentation.

Doubtless, you have documentation in your files that the industrial chemicals used to fluoridate water may present unique health risks not found with naturally occurring fluoride. Fluorosilicic acid (FSA) and sodium silicofluoride used to fluoridate drinking water are industrial waste products from the phosphate fertilizer industry. FSA is a corrosive acid linked to higher lead levels in children. In fact, a recent study has found that the effect of fluoridation chemicals on blood lead levels may be greatest in houses built prior to 1946. Lead is a neurotoxin that can cause learning disabilities and behavioral problems in children. Why is there more outcry about lead in toys imported from China than FSA-linked lead prevalent in our homes?

97% of Western Europe has chosen fluoride free water. Thus, rather than mandating fluoride treatment for the whole population, it allows individuals the right to choose, or refuse, fluoride.

Meanwhile, your attention is directed to <http://yes4cleanwater.org/Documents/CitiesRejectedF.pdf> for some statistics on our own home front about cities/towns that have stopped fluoridation beginning March 1990 and ending April 1, 2008.

Of the 158 cities/towns listed:

- 10 towns/cities rejected fluoride a TOTAL OF 32 TIMES!
- 15 stopped fluoridation between 5 and 24 years;
- 8 stopped fluoridation between 25 and 39 years;
- 10 stopped fluoridation between 40 and 55 years.

All the rest never started or stopped at five years or less. One stopped after only eight months. 14 towns/cities are in the state of Washington. (Note: There are 13 counties or water districts listed that could affect more than one town in each.)

Bellingham: On November 8, 2005, the fluoride proposal was defeated in Bellingham by a broad bi-partisan group of volunteers, community leaders, elected officials, local media, a water district commissioner and city water worker and including: Council member Arne Hanna expressing his lack of support for fluoridation, particularly, because it was an "issue of taking away individual rights" and Dr. Debra Hopkins (dentist) saying "Increasing the fluoride intake of the population without regard to established risk factors such as age, weight, kidney function, total water consumption and fluoride intake from other sources is hardly a health benefit. It is medical negligence."

South Snohomish has a grim history, which influenced its effort against fluoridation on 1/12/05. A series of arsenic poisonings near Granite Falls in Snohomish County were identified during 1985–87. An initial investigation revealed the source of arsenic exposure to be high levels of arsenic in well water. A large number of wells in eastern Snohomish County were tested, residents were interviewed and sources of contamination, both natural and man-made, were investigated. More than 70 private drinking-water wells were found to contain elevated levels of arsenic. Source: US EPA Seattle; WA DOH, Olympia.

Milton, Sumner and Edgewood: The Milton City Council voted 7-0 on 9/20/04 to end fluoridation. The city of 6,025 residents began adding the chemical to its water on March 8 and spent about \$82,897 to install the system. Although the city was eligible for \$47,040 from the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department to help cover the cost of fluoridation, it won't receive that money now, said health director Dr. Federico Cruz-Uribe. The health department in 2002 ordered Milton and other large water suppliers to install fluoridation equipment. Health officials said the move was necessary to help combat tooth decay and oral diseases among the more than 238,000 county residents--especially children--whose water was not treated with the chemical. But the state Supreme Court threw out the order last May. Councilman Bob Whalen said Milton residents opposed fluoride in their drinking water. He said residents resented the county order, and view fluoridation as forced medication. Cruz-Uribe said his department will propose a revised order Oct. 6 to force fluoridation in local communities including Milton, Sumner, Puyallup, Edgewood, Bonney Lake, Parkland and Spanaway. The cities of Sumner (on 8/2/04) and Edgewood (on 9/28/04) successfully defended their anti-fluoride stance.

On 9/11/04, the **City of Issaquah** indefinitely postponed a decision on whether to add fluoride to city drinking water. Nancy Davidson, Issaquah City Council president, said a few residents and dentists broached the topic in late 2003, when the city was considering chlorinating its water. The council utilities committee asked for public comment during a meeting last week. Bret Heath, the city's public works operations director, said the council utilities committee heard comments on the issue from about a dozen people. "Most were against it," Heath said. Results from an informal poll on the city's Web site also showed that the majority of 112 respondents didn't want fluoride in the water. Heath said people cited possible allergic reactions, negative effects on their health and a lack of information on fluoridation as reasons they want their water kept fluoride-free.

Spokane voters rejected fluoride again in November 1990. But the effort to fluoridate the city's water came closer to succeeding than in 1969 or 1984. "That's still too close for comfort," said Kateri Caron of the Fluoride Awareness Coalition. "I'm relieved it's over. I'm relieved it's a 'no' vote, but (the push for fluoridation) isn't going to go away." In 1969, fluoridation was opposed by 65 percent of voters. The proposal lost by 13,707 votes. Support for fluoridation increased in 1984, with 45.56 percent of voters backing it. Supporters vowed to try again in a future election. "We're going to get fluoride into Spokane," said John Robideaux of People for Healthy Teeth, the nonprofit organization that put Proposition 1 on this year's ballot. Voters should expect fluoridation back on the ballot in two years, said Mary Smith, chairwoman of People for Healthy Teeth. The organization spent nearly \$100,000 campaigning for water fluoridation and gathering signatures to put Proposition 1 on the ballot. Only about \$5,000 was spent by fluoride opponents. People for Healthy Teeth's funds came from the Washington Dental Service, the Spokane County Medical Society and other organizations and community members. Most of the money was used for polling and advertisements. Opponents, many of whom believe fluoride is a toxin, argued against the proposal partially because of its cost--an estimated \$1 million to install equipment and another \$300,000 to maintain annually. It's disappointing that Proposition 1 wasn't passed in Spokane, Robideaux said. "We're faced with people who are passionate about adding anything to the water," he said. "To their credit, for as few people as they were, they made quite a bit of noise."

Sequim--The City Council decided 5/7/03 not to fluoridate city water after a community survey showed strong objection to the chemical additive. By rejecting fluoridation by a 4-1 vote, the Sequim council lived up to its promise to base its decision on the results of the survey. Councilman Paul McHugh cast the lone vote favoring fluoridation, which advocates say helps to promote dental health. "We're pleased that they followed the majority vote," said Einar Denstad, a member of Clallam County Citizens for Clean Drinking Water, a fluoridation opposition group. "No" votes outnumbered "yes" votes on the survey by nearly a 2-1 margin--444 to 223.

The city council decided on 1/15/02 that **Kennewick** would remain fluoride free. More than half the people filling the council chambers erupted in cheers and applause Tuesday night after a 4-3 vote rejected a \$450,000 grant to help pay for putting the substance in city water as an agent to fight tooth decay. Councilman Thomas Moak made the motion to accept the grant from the Washington Dental Service Foundation, quickly gaining a second from Councilwoman Margery Price. It was futile. Mayor Jim Beaver, Councilmen Robert Olson and Bob Parks already had declared their opposition. Councilman James Hempstead was with Moak, but Councilman Paul Parish's no vote confirmed defeat for fluoride advocates. "We'll take our money somewhere else," said Dr. Spencer Jilek, a dentist in Pasco and a member of the board of the Washington Dental Service Foundation. The council allowed no public testimony but did permit each side to have five minutes to summarize their positions before the vote. Craig Christian, a dentist from Richland, said he switched from being a fluoride supporter after researching its benefits and systemic effects. "There is some dental benefit," he said, but added that a 1999 Environmental Protection Agency study reported finding high levels of lead in the blood of children who had been receiving fluoride. "High-level scientists now say fluoride is not beneficial and causes some cancers." Jilek and Michael Tuohy shared their allotted time to urge fluoridation of the city water supply to about 58,000 people. "This community, more than any other in Washington, needs fluoride. It is safe and effective," Jilek said. "We cannot afford not to do this," Tuohy said. Olson peppered Jilek with questions about where the \$450,000 was coming from and whether fluoride was a toxin. Olson then drilled the dentist on why proponents weren't targeting "candy and soda pop being sold in schools" as part of the problem. When Olson took a breather, Parks took over. "Will fluoride prevent caries?" Parks asked. "Isn't pop, candy and not brushing the problem? If I use fluoride does that mean I don't have to brush my teeth?" Jilek tried to wedge in answers, but he barely was heard because Parks didn't allow time for a reply. "I'm not against fluoride," Parks said. "I use it and give it to my kids, but I'm against putting it in the water. But the mayor rushed in for final, furious last words. "I have a real problem because it involves children, and the choice should be made by the parents of those children," Beaver said. The mayor also resented being given a Feb. 15 deadline by the foundation to accept the grant. "If you were really concerned about health you'd give more than two weeks," he said. Beaver referred to a pile of reports he pulled off the Internet as testimonials about how fluoridation has come under suspicion across the country, and studies that have shown that adding the element to municipal water has not had any effect on oral health for children. In a final stab, the mayor expressed suspicion about the source of the grant. "Nothing's free. So where's the hook?" he asked. "It disturbs me it's not on the ballot, and we've got this drop dead date. I'll vote no." Jilek said after the vote that he wasn't surprised. "I knew it would be tough. For them to question the validity of the foundation is ridiculous. If they'd researched us they would know that," he said. Jilek said the foundation has a priority list and will simply take the money someplace else in Washington.

In a unanimous 7-0 vote, the **Goldendale** City Council voted to reject any proposal to add fluoride to the city's water supply in their meeting Monday, Sept. 17, 2001. The vote, preceded by a litany of anti-fluoride comments from council members, put to rest the push by the Klickitat County Public Health Department and local health professionals, including dentists, to pass a fluoridation initiative. "We're spending thousands of dollars a year filtering our water," said council member Alan Van Horn. "It seems hypocritical to put something in it." The vote came less than two weeks after a fluoridation forum organized by the Klickitat County Dept. of Public Health; the meeting began with a pro-fluoridation message, but developed into a cauldron of opposition when the floor was opened up for public comment. Health concerns and costs proved to be the two major deterrents against fluoridation. While nearly 50 percent of state drinking water is fluoridated, many questions remain about long-term health effects. "I've spent hundreds of hours researching this issue," said council member Gwendolyn Grundei. "I was looking at it from a civil liberties slant. I found floodgates of information on the many health issues, surrounding fluoridation. There's no definitive evidence that it does much for teeth. In fact, fluoride is an enzyme poisoner." The council's decision comes a month after the White Salmon city council rejected a similar fluoridation proposal. Last year, **Wenatchee** voters decided against fluoridation. The Goldendale Department of Public Works commissioned a recent study on the costs of fluoridation that revealed a startup pricetag in excess of \$200,000. Annual operating costs were estimated at approximately \$13,000.

Voters in the **East Wenatchee Water District** rejected efforts to put fluoride in the regional water system on 11/7/00. "It was the voters' choice," said Dr. Robert Merrill, spokesman for Wenatchee Valley Citizens for Healthy Teeth. "Unless there's a significant change in what people want, it's dead for now." Commissioners in the water district put the non-binding, advisory referendum on Tuesday's ballot, saying they would go along with the will of the voters. Eileen Kirkpatrick, who opposed water fluoridation, said voters made the right choice. "I think the current (water district) commissioners will respect the people's choice," Kirkpatrick said. Fluoride could only be added to the water supply if two of the three agencies involved in the system-- East Wenatchee, Wenatchee and the Chelan County PUD-- agreed. The Wenatchee City Council had said in the past, and reaffirmed this spring that it favored fluoridation. The campaigns for and against adding water to the regional water supply were emotional. Signs with skull-and-cross bones calling fluoride a poison were put up by opponents. Those in favor of fluoridation ran a commercial making fun of those fears. It was also an expensive campaign for pro-fluoride activists, who raised \$34, 000. The anti-fluoride group, Wenatchee Valley Citizens for Safe Drinking Water, spent about \$3,000.

In February 1999, **Bremerton** citizens voted to keep fluoride out of the public water supply by a margin of 55% to 45%. A large part of defeat of fluoridation was due to public interest in the health and safety of their children. A televised debate between the two sides helped clarify the issues of safety and usefulness. Many of the claims of the proponents just couldn't be supported by research, as the polls later showed.

The city of **Olympia** remains committed (since 12/15/99) to non-fluoridation.

While researching this topic, an interesting paradox emerged concerning the city of (You Betcha) **Wasilla, Alaska**: As soon as the hazardous waste chemical is sold, it becomes a product. Therefore, proponents say that product is added to your water and not a hazardous waste!!!! The Frontiersman (newspaper) reported on Oct. 13, 1984 that Wasilla, having rejected fluoridation, found itself with 100 pounds of soggy fluoride on its hands which it wanted to give away. A state official told Wasilla if the chemical was not sold, it could be classified as hazardous waste by the feds. To avoid that complication, Wasilla charged the neighboring city of Palmer a quarter for the fluoride. According to federal regulations, "if Wasilla gives it away and then Palmer doesn't use it it's a hazardous waste. **If they sell it, it's a product. If they give it away, it's a hazardous waste.**" Department of Environmental Conservation field officer Joe LeBeau said. [emphasis added]

Solution: By adding fluoride to tap water, you are putting in harm's way the very ones you wish to protect-- infants, children and at-risk populations. Cessation of fluoridation is not a problem because, as western Europe has demonstrated, there are many equally effective and less intrusive ways of delivering fluoride to people who actually want it:

- (A) Topical fluoride products (toothpaste and mouthwashes) are readily available at all grocery stores and pharmacies. For those individuals who wish to use fluoride, it is very easy to find and very inexpensive to buy. It is noteworthy that a doctor's prescription is required.
- (B) The concern that some people in the community cannot afford these purchases, the money saved by not fluoridating can be spent subsidizing topical fluoride products for families in need.
- (C) The vast majority of fluoride added to water supplies is wasted, since over 99% of tap water is not actually consumed by a human being. It is used instead to wash clothes, dishes, cars, flush toilets, water lawns.

Our situation is that you have a contractual relationship with a dental association. To this, I say, doesn't the health and welfare of babies, kids and the at-risk people far outweigh the costs of biting the bullet to break this contract. One of the communities listed above has done just that!!!! It's the right thing to do.