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Statement of Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Strickland on Senate Bill Exempting Hydrants from Lead and Copper Rules

"Yesterday, Congress passed an important bill that, if signed by the President, will prevent New Yorkers from footing the bill to replace nearly 1,400 perfectly good fire hydrants to fulfill a sudden and surprising interpretation of a proposed EPA rule related to lead and copper limits in drinking water. Under the current interpretation of EPA's rule, we would be required to retrofit all of the new hydrants we have purchased but not yet installed - and do so on short notice. All of this to address a theoretical risk that could only materialize if someone was to drink from a hydrant for an extended period of time.

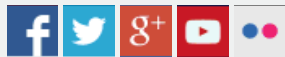
"At DEP we maintain a network of about 110,000 fire hydrants throughout the five boroughs that protect the public and help us manage a pressurized system of more than 7,000 miles of water mains. Each year we replace about 1,000 of those hydrants as they age, break, or are damaged. That requires we keep a healthy inventory of new hydrants. And the hydrants we have in stock are valued at more than \$1 million.

"We ensure our water is of the highest quality with more than half a million annual tests taken both in the watershed, and at more than 1,000 sampling stations throughout the five boroughs. At every level of government the goal is the same - healthy drinking water for the people we serve. However, unlike many public services that receive significant support from the federal government, nearly every dollar we invest in our water and wastewater systems is paid for by New Yorkers through water and sewer bills.

More Information

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“Over the last decade we have invested more than \$10.5 billion in the infrastructure that delivers drinking water to New Yorkers. It is our responsibility to ensure that we continue to make every effort to work with our regulators to enact smart rules, based on sound science, to ensure that our customers continue to receive the highest quality drinking water at an affordable price.

“I thank Congress and specifically Senator Charles Schumer and Congressman Paul Tonko for supporting this legislation. We have the best drinking water in the world and we need to ensure that it remains affordable for our customers. We are committed to continuing our partnership with our state and federal regulators to protect our water supply from realistic threats to public health. That pragmatic approach has created the world-class water system that has allowed our city to grow and prosper.”

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