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WS-01303A-02-0868
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Dear Ms. Kristin L. Mayers:

Thirteen million Americans are in for a surprise next year when they open their water bills and see increases of $50, $75, or even hundreds of dollars a month. The EPA's deadline for lowering arsenic in drinking water has become an inflexible barrier to lower-cost treatments available within a year or two.

That means consumers here and around the country will be condemned to high water rates for decades. For those of us in Tubac, Arizona, we have been told to expect to pay another $78 a month – another $936 a year, before we even turn a tap on.

We have asked for your help, but so far to no avail. Water companies are ready to break ground to meet the deadline – and we can't get help from our elected officials.

The Berkeley National Laboratory has developed an arsenic treatment using coal ash. It costs $1.00 per household per year. It's ready for licensing, but too late to meet the January 2006 deadline.

Point-of-use systems, at less than $200 per household to install and $35 a year to operate, are rejected as "too expensive" by our water company. In fact, the water company has not pursued the non-treatment options described by ADEQ as an "essential first step." Nor have they considered blending water from an underutilized well that consistently tests far below the EPA's new standard. They have turned a half-million dollar project into a $2.65 million project.

So American Water Company will profit from treating arsenic around the country. Those profits go overseas to its parent company in Germany. They say they're up against the federal mandate. The Arizona Department of Environmental Quality says it is simply required to enforce the EPA standard. The EPA says they are "statutorily bound to the existing compliance date." They refer our concerns back to the water company. We are stuck in a classic bureaucratic circle of logic.

Unless you and your colleagues in Congress take some action now, consumers in Arizona will be stuck with $110 million of unnecessary expense. In Nebraska the bill is $120 million. And around the nation, hundreds of millions of dollars more.

Please introduce some logic to this issue. The public health and consumers' interests can both be protected – with just a little more time.

Arizona Corporation Commission
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Sincerely,

Judith Wallace

William & Judith Wallace

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