

# Michigan's lament: As Congress bickers, Flint suffers

By Matthew Daly

WASHINGTON (AP) - It's been two years since problems began with the drinking water in Flint, Michigan, and nearly six months since officials declared a public health emergency there.

Yet a bipartisan congressional effort to aid the predominantly African-American city north of Detroit is idling in the Senate - stalled by the objections of a Republican senator from Utah.

Rep. Dan Kildee, a Michigan Democrat who represents Flint, says his hometown is struggling while Congress bickers.

"This is not an abstraction. This is 100,000 kids and adults all suffering every single day and it's pretty frustrating," Kildee said in an interview.

"We will not give up, that's for sure," Kildee said, vowing that congressional Republicans "are not going to run out the clock on Flint, Michigan."

In fact, support for Flint is bipartisan. Michigan's congressional delegation has unanimously pushed for Flint aid, and Republican Gov. Rick Snyder urged Congress to pass the bipartisan Senate bill "immediately" at an otherwise contentious congressional hearing last week.

Michigan Democratic Sens. Debbie Stabenow and Gary Peters reached agreement with key Republicans last month on a \$220 million package to fix and replace lead-contaminated pipes in Flint and other cities.

But the bill remains on hold after Republican Sen. Mike Lee of Utah objected in late February. Michigan has a budget surplus and does not need federal money to fix the problem, Lee said.

Stabenow's frustration has been evident. In an impassioned speech on the Senate floor, she said that as a mother and grandmother, she "can't imagine the fear and horror" Flint families feel as they are forced - month after month - to use bottled water to drink and bathe.

Like other Americans, Flint residents "assumed that when you get up in the morning and turn on the faucet, when you take a shower or you feed your children, clean water is going to come out of the pipes," Stabenow said in a March 17 speech. "We all assume that. That is pretty much a basic human right."

But not in Flint, where the water is tainted with lead. Flint's drinking water became tainted when the city switched from the Detroit water system and began drawing from the Flint River in April 2014 to save money. The impoverished city was under state control at the time.

Regulators failed to ensure the water was treated properly and lead from aging pipes leached into the water supply.

Elevated lead levels have been found in at least 325 people, including 221 children. Lead contamination has been linked to learning disabilities and other problems.

Stabenow, in her Senate speech, said she and other lawmakers have been pushing since January to pass a bill to help Flint, "yet the children of Flint are still waiting. The children of Flint need our help. We have a bipartisan bill, and we need a vote."

Lee said he, too, wants a vote - but only if the bill is paid for in what he considers an honest manner. Not only that, legislation labeled as helping Flint actually allows cities across the country to replace aging infrastructure where lead lurks as potential health hazard, he said.

"What's really happening here is that Washington politicians are using the crisis in Flint as an excuse to funnel taxpayer money to their own home states, and trying to sneak it through the Senate without proper debate and amendment. I respectfully object," Lee said in a statement.

Peters and other supporters say the inclusion of cities only makes the bill more important as lead-tainted water is found in Newark, N.J., Sebring, Ohio and other municipalities.

"This is an issue every community in our country may potentially face," Peters said.

The Senate bill would be paid for by redirecting up to \$250 million in unspent money from an Energy Department loan program for high-tech cars. Lee, a freshman who was elected with the help of the tea party, does not object to redirecting money to Flint, but he wants to ensure that money committed to Flint does not add to the federal deficit, said spokesman Conn Carroll.

Stabenow and Peters, whose state is the hub of U.S. auto manufacturing, want to protect that Energy Department program, which involves loans issued through the Advanced Technology Vehicles Manufacturing program, a remnant of the 2009 economic stimulus law.

While lawmakers continue to negotiate - and point fingers over who's to blame for the Flint crisis - Kildee said the time to act is now.

"The people in Flint are American citizens and they are in crisis," he said. "When there is a disaster and Americans face a crisis, we all pitch in, and the people of Flint deserve that."

## Police Chief Finalists

(Continued From Front)

(CMPD), Smathers currently oversees the Field Services Group consisting of three divisions and approximately 315 police officers. Since 1994, Smathers has served in almost every section and division in the CMPD including uniform patrol, criminal investigations, SWAT, police training, supervision of patrol officers, and supervision of the armed robbery/sexual assault unit, support services including purchasing, evidence and property control, and accreditation.

While serving as captain of the Charlotte Eastway Patrol Division, one of the most ethnically diverse assignments in the city, Smathers received a Chief's Community Policing award for his leadership and the division's achievement of reducing crime, including closing a crime-plagued hotel, while successfully managing two federal crime-fighting grants. During this time, he also served as the commander of the Crisis Negotiation Team and commanded a Mobile Field Force Platoon during the Democratic National Convention in 2012.

Smathers has extensive experience in Investigations from commanding the Robbery/Sexual Assault Units where he achieved significant case clearance increases along with advancing cold case investigations while being a Chief's Unit Citation recipient. As major, Smathers led the entire Criminal Investigations Bureau commanding the investigation of all violent felonies. Under his leadership the homicide clearance rate was 81 percent, far exceeding the national average.

Since 2008, Smathers has been active with the National Innocence Project, providing technical assistance to law enforcement agencies across the country in developing policies and procedures for the handling of DNA evidence and witness identification. He also is an active member of the Police Executives Research Forum, the International Association of Chiefs of Police, and the National Tactical Officers Association. To view his resume, visit the City's website.

According to Bonfield, each candidate has had extensive and successful law enforcement careers, demonstrating not only great leadership, but also perseverance of justice during challenging moments in their careers. "While each candidate was vetted through a thorough background investigation, I can assure the public that throughout the assessment process, they consistently demonstrated a commitment to police professionalism, transparency, accountability, and a positive relationship with the communities they serve," he said.

Deputy Chief Davis was exonerated after being discharged in 2008 when she was falsely accused of a cover up during a scandal in the City of Atlanta Police Department, and Major Smathers withstood significant pressure in 2013 as he investigated the circumstances surrounding the fatal shooting of Jonathan Farrell and recommended a fellow officer be charged.

The Durham community will have an opportunity to meet Davis and Smathers when they participate in a moderated community forum on Wednesday, April 6 from 7 p.m. to 8 p.m. in City Hall Council Chambers, 101 City Hall Plaza. Residents are urged to submit questions to be asked during the forum beginning Tuesday, March 29 until 5 p.m. on Monday, April 4 in one of the following ways:

## North Carolina community stands up to stop a Central American teen's deportation

(Continued From Front)

immigration raids. Besides Durham, those raids took place in Charlotte, Greenville, Raleigh and Thomasville.

"What's really tragic about it is that these kids are left defenseless and have to navigate the system by themselves," Benitez said.

Organizers' efforts have rallied support for the teens and put pressure on congressional leadership and ICE to release them. Besides getting support from Rep. Butterfield, they helped secure the assistance of U.S. Rep. Alma Adams, a Democrat whose district includes Charlotte, for two teens from that city who were detained and faced deportation. This week ICE granted them temporary stays of deportation as well.

The temporary halt in the teens' deportations will allow them to appeal their cases to stay in the U.S. Advocates say that all of them are fleeing direct threats from gangs in their home countries, and that they have not yet been able to fully make their cases due to problems including inadequate legal counsel.

In the meantime, with the teens remaining in ICE detention, organizers say they will keep the pressure on federal officials to release Acosta and the others and let them return to their families in North Carolina.

"This is a terrible situation, but there is a large community fighting for Wildin," Benitez said, "and fighting for the community in general."

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**City of Durham Announces Community Forums**

**Meet the Finalists for Durham's Next Police Chief**

**Wednesday, April 6, 2016**  
7 p.m. to 8 p.m. Durham City Hall  
101 City Hall Plaza, Durham

This will be a moderated forum for candidates to answer as many questions as possible. Submit your question by 5 p.m. on April 4 in one of the following ways:

- [publicaffairs@durhamnc.gov](mailto:publicaffairs@durhamnc.gov)
- [Twitter.com/CityofDurhamNC](https://twitter.com/CityofDurhamNC)
- [Facebook.com/CityofDurhamNC](https://facebook.com/CityofDurhamNC)
- Durham One Call (919) 560-1200

**Questions also may be submitted during the forum and will be asked by the moderator as time permits.**

**Not able to attend? Watch the forum live on any of the outlets listed below!**

- Durham Television Network on Time Warner Cable Channel 8 and AT&T U-verse Channel 99
- Durham Television Network livestream @ [DurhamNC.gov](https://www.facebook.com/CityofDurhamNC)
- [Facebook.com/CityofDurhamNC](https://facebook.com/CityofDurhamNC)

## Durham History HUB Seeking Donations For History Grove in Honor of Louis E. Austin

The Durham History HUB is seeking donations to bring a plaque and historic site in Southern Durham tentatively set for Southern Durham.

The HUB is seeking \$1,000 for the project and at present \$500 has been donated by THE CAROLINA TIMES.

Donations can be mailed directly to Patrick Mucklow, Museum of Durham History, P.O. Box 362, Durham, NC 27702, INDICATING THE GIFT IS IN SUPPORT OF THE LOUIS E. AUSTIN HISTORY GROVE.


For more information go to [www.modh.org](http://www.modh.org) or call 919-244-4043

## Louis E. Austin

Editor-Publisher of *The Carolina Times*


### The Long Black Freedom Struggle

Born in Enfield, North Carolina in 1898, Louis Austin personified the black freedom struggle. Growing up in an era of white supremacy, many blacks gave up hope of overturning racial segregation in economic, political, and social life. But Austin had the vision and fortitude to use the power of the press to fight for a country that treated all as equal.





### The Great Depression

After purchasing Durham's black newsweekly *The Carolina Times* in 1927, Austin championed anti-segregation action through the courts and black political mobilization through the Democratic Party. In 1933, Austin initiated the South's first legal challenge to segregated higher education, the attempt to enroll Thomas Hocutt, represented by local black attorneys Conrad Pearson and Cecil McCoy in the School of Pharmacy at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill. Although losing in state court, the Hocutt case was an important precedent to the landmark 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, in which the U.S. Supreme Court outlawed racial segregation in public schools.



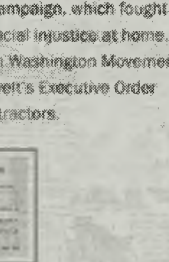
### World War II

During WWII, Austin backed the "Double V" campaign, which fought for victory against the Axis abroad and against racial injustice at home. He also supported A. Philip Randolph's March on Washington Movement, which prompted President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Executive Order banning racial discrimination by defense contractors.

### Postwar Civil Rights Movement, 1945-1971

Austin joined activists who supported litigation and political action while advocating civil disobedience. In 1947, he arranged the South's first interracial football game, held in Durham between a white team from Philadelphia and a black team from Washington, DC. In 1953, he handled public relations for Rencher N. Harris's election as the first black member of the Durham City Council, and in the 1960s, he published the names of stores boycotted for their failure to hire black workers. Austin died in Durham in 1971. His daughter Vivian Austin Edmonds published *The Carolina Times* from 1971 to 2002, and his grandson Kenneth Edmonds continues to publish the newspaper today.



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