

The Advocate
October 2016
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EPA and School Infrastructure Issues

A new addition to AASA's active lobbying portfolio is the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and other facility-related issues. One recent issue regards florescent light ballasts containing Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs). This is a carcinogenic chemical that was used until 1979 as a fire retardant in light ballasts and has mostly been removed through routine maintenance and upgrades.

The EPA regulations would require all schools remove any remaining PCB-containing ballasts within two or four years, with no financial assistance. Schools are already on track to remove these ballasts and will have to in order to fit new light bulb regulations.

AASA recently joined a coalition of education and local governance associations to write a [letter](#) in response to this proposed rule. The letter argues that the proposed rule is based on insufficient data, the EPA underestimates the costs for PCB removal in schools, the proposed rule is duplicative of other federal efforts and the proposed timeline for the rule's implementation is unworkable.

A similar issue has come to light after the discovery of lead in the water supply in Flint, Mich., Newark, N.J. and other communities. Under the current Lead and Copper rule, public water utilities are required to test a sample of homes they serve, but are not required to test schools. Many superintendents currently pay for this testing themselves.

The U.S. Senate recently passed the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA), and Sen. Cory Booker tried to include an amendment that would require the water utilities to test a sample of schools they serve. The amendment also introduced a grant program to pay for remediation of lead issues in some schools. The amendment was not submitted in time and was not included in the final bill. WRDA does include one section regarding lead in school water. It establishes a grant program for states to help LEAs and child care facilities pay for water testing. The grant program is authorized at \$20 million over five years, though that is unlikely to be fully appropriated.