



Support Local Choice!

DIPRA is pleased to be working with water professionals across this country to support local choice in the specification of pipe material for water infrastructure. There are concerted attempts by the plastic pipe industry and its allies at the federal, state and local levels to introduce preferential legislation for plastic pipe. This legislation has been introduced in at least eleven states, but none have passed the bills. The efforts, however, continue and threaten to supersede the decisions of professionals, such as yourself, in determining the appropriate pipe for your community.

We encourage you to stand up for the right to make sound decisions in the interests of your community. We ask that you be vigilant in discovering whether this legislation is being considered in your state or community. We also seek your help to work with fellow water professionals, engineers and others to ensure your concerns are known. For an excellent summary of this issue, please see the article on the back which originally appeared in The Hill on July 17, 2017.

Join in the effort to support local choice – and to safeguard the ability of professionals to make the best decisions for water infrastructure now and in the future. To learn more or how you can assist with this effort, go to www.dipra.org/government-affairs/local-choice or contact us at info@dipra.org.

Plastic pipe lobby loses state battles, now takes aim at Congress

By Patrick Hogan, President, Ductile Iron Pipe Research Association
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In the pages of The Hill recently, a spokesperson for the Vinyl Institute complained that polyvinyl chloride (PVC) pipe is blocked from consideration, restrictions are imposed on it as a material choice, and that bidding is closed in the material procurement process by states. These allegations are false. PVC pipe, for which the Vinyl Institute lobbies, has had the opportunity to prove itself for many years. Concerns remain. Still, the plastic lobbyists persist, and have called their campaign one for “open competition.” That is the flip side of truth.

What’s initially important to note is the quick debunking of the PVC lobby’s myth by the professional engineering and water industry – many of whom sent an open letter to House and Senate members the week of July Fourth – about competition. What these water professionals know, and the plastic industry wants neither the public nor their elected officials to become aware of, is that the market place for water pipes is already open. As it stands, when a community and its water professionals want to use a specific material for their water pipes they get to select it.

Perhaps this is why the plastic industry’s efforts to legislate “open competition” have failed in all of the 11 states where bills have been attempted. State legislators have caught on that this is a political stunt, that it has nothing to do with good government and respecting taxpayers, and that it would create more red tape and regulations. The facts are clear: such preferential legislation would supersede professionals’ expertise and force favor of plastic, even if a community and its water professionals believe it to be the wrong choice.

Not wanting to use PVC is hardly rare. The reality about plastic is that it cannot withstand many of the conditions that iron can, thus not making it suitable for a plethora of different projects across the country. For instance, a broken PVC pipe is a ruptured pipe that needs to be taken out of service – and, depending on the size of the pipe, this could be for days. While the city water department tests the water to ensure it was not contaminated during the pipe’s rupture, those constituents are left to bottled water. This does not happen with iron.

As Congress looks to rebuild our nation’s water infrastructure, we have options. We can rely on professional engineers and water utility experts to decide what is best for their communities. Or we can succumb to legislation that produces more red tape. The first option is an investment in the future; the latter would delay projects, raise costs, and potentially force the selection of only one type of pipe – regardless of its suitability for the project.

As the president of the Ductile Iron Pipe Research Association, I am proud of the work that our members do to support communities with pipeline products that are safe, reliable and long lasting. I’d also point out that these pipeline manufacturers work with water utility officials and their professional engineers – and do not seek to subvert them through legislative mandates, as is being attempted by the plastic pipe industry. Competition is already in place. It is healthy. And it allows the renewal efforts for our water infrastructure to move forward without obstruction from special interests.