

# ***Trouble on Tap: Challenges to Affordable Water in the United States***

*International Human Rights Organization the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, in collaboration with Representatives John Conyers, Jr. (D-Mich.), Charles Rangel (D-New York), and Marcy Kaptur (D-Ohio)*

Invite you to

## ***A Briefing on Water Affordability and Accessibility in the United States And implications of the human right to water***

**Thursday, February 26**

**2:00 PM - 3:30 PM**

**Hearing Room 2226**

**Rayburn House Office Building**

**Washington, D.C. 20515**

Moderated by:

**Michael Shank**

Journalist and Director of Media Strategy for  
Climate Nexus

### ***Featured Presentations***

#### **The View from Detroit**

**Alice Jennings, Esquire Edwards and Jennings, P.C.**

*Lead lawyer in a federal class-action lawsuit brought on behalf of community organizations and Detroit residents affected by the city's mass water shutoffs.*

#### **National Trends in Affordability**

**Judy Sheahan, Assistant Executive Director -**

**U.S. Conference of Mayors**

*Represents views of the nation's mayors on environmental policy to Congress and the Administration and manager of the Mayors' Water Council and Municipal Waste Management Association*



#### **The Economics of Affordability**

**Roger Colton, Economist Fisher, Sheehan & Colton: Public Finance and General Economics**

*Developer of the original Detroit Water and Sewer Affordability Plan and its subsequent updates and expert witness in the city's 2014 bankruptcy case.*

#### **National Trends in Shutoffs and Legislative Remedies**

**Patricia Jones, JD, LIM, PhD**

**Senior Program Leader for Environmental Justice**

**Unitarian Universalist Service Committee**

*International expert on the human right to water and coordinator of the 2011 and 2014 United Nations missions to Detroit, Mich., of the Special Rapporteur on the human right to water*

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America's cities and states will need an estimated \$4.8 trillion to repair and replace the nation's aging, leaking water lines and wastewater systems over the next two decades. In tandem, costs to consumers for water services continue to spiral. In some cities, rates have tripled in the past decade.

For all too many of the nation's poor and most vulnerable, water from the tap is becoming unaffordable. Across the U.S., between 2001 and 2011, water bills for the poorest customers grew faster as a percentage of income than all other utility bills except electricity.

In the midst of Detroit's unprecedented struggles to overcome bankruptcy, Detroit's mass water shutoffs affected more than 30,000 households. Many are elderly, ill, disabled, and families living below poverty level. Detroit's crisis and similar shutoff efforts in other cities echo fears that access to affordable water may be slipping away, as the very definitions of "affordability" shift and change.

***What's the outlook, and what are some of the solutions being pursued, particularly for the most vulnerable among us? Please join us for this important Congressional briefing on public water affordability and accessibility. It's a look into the future. For all of us.***

**For media: Informal question and answer session  
3:30 PM - 4:00 PM**

**For more information, email:  
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