

Ietro Press Clipping Bureau  
An Extraordinary Clipping Service  
Phone (225) 791-8888

The Times

Shreveport, LA

Daily & Sunday  
(Dly 73,372; Sun 90,047)

July 19, 2008

# New law calls for fluoridation of drinking water

By Claire Taylor  
ctaylor@theadvertiser.com

Lafayette residents are not among the 36 percent of Louisianans who have access to drinking water containing fluoride, a group of compounds proved to help prevent cavities.

But that may be changing.

The state Legislature approved and Gov. Bobby Jindal recently signed into law Act 761, which requires Louisiana public water systems that serve 5,000 or more customers to add fluoride to drinking water.

That means 40,000 retail customers served by Lafayette Utilities System may one day be ingesting small amounts of fluoride every time they drink or cook with tap water.

"This reaches across all economic boundaries," said Dr. Bill Keaty, a Lafayette pediatric dentist. "The people who probably will benefit the most are those who can't afford to go to the dentist or don't go to the dentist and are not aware of proper oral hygiene techniques."

Adding fluoride to municipal drinking water is not just about preventing cavities. It's about preventing infections that can take lives.

"The same blood that goes to your teeth goes all around your body. It can infect your heart, your eyes and anything else," said Lafayette dentist Dr. Raphael Baranco, a former Lafayette School Board member.

In the past year or two, a couple of boys died from the consequences

of untreated tooth decay, said Dr. Howard Pollick, American Dental Association spokesman on fluoridation. A Maryland boy developed a brain abscess when bacteria from untreated tooth decay got into his blood stream, he said.

Not everyone agrees fluoridated drinking water is a good thing.

The Fluoride Action Network opposes the practice while the Environmental Working Group wants additional research. They argue too much fluoridation is harmful.

They cite reports that suggest fluoridated water can lead to the ingestion of too much fluoride, which may be linked to thyroid, dental and bone problems, for starters.

"None of those things have ever

been substantiated," Lafayette pediatric dentist Dr. John Hendry said. What has been proved with more than 50 years of practice and research is fluoridated water reduces tooth decay by 50 percent to 60 percent, he said.

Every Louisiana water system that serves at least 5,000 customers must submit to the state by March 1 an estimate of how much they think it will cost to buy and install fluoridation equipment.

Lafayette Utilities System Director Terry Huval said his staff is working on that estimate.

Act 761 states that utilities are not required to move ahead with fluoridation unless the state identifies sufficient funds to cover those costs.