



Omaha Lead Site
Community Advisory Group
P.O. Box 12301
Omaha, NE 68112

January 24, 2008

Regional Administrator John Askew
U.S. EPA, Region VII
901 North 5th Street
Kansas City, Kansas 66101-2907

RE: December 6, 2007 Editorial in the Omaha World-Herald

Dear Mr. Askew:

The Omaha Lead Site Community Advisory Group (CAG) is writing to you with concerns regarding your editorial published in the Omaha World-Herald on December 6, 2007.

The CAG is particularly concerned about your statement referring to soil as: "the greatest source of danger to Omaha children from lead". You went on to say, "that last statement is true despite contentions that the greatest threat to Omaha children comes from lead paint. In many cities, lead-based paint is the major culprit. Not so in Omaha."

The CAG is concerned about these statements for three main reasons:

1) The CAG is unaware of any data that supports the statement that soil is the main source of lead exposure to Omaha children. However, the CAG is aware of county data showing that lead-based paint is a significant lead exposure source to children.

The CAG agrees that soil is a potential source of childhood lead exposure; however, the CAG firmly disagrees with the contention that soil is the main source of exposure and lead-based paint is not an issue in Omaha. The Douglas County Health Department reports that in 99% of cases of childhood lead poisoning, a lead-based paint hazard is found in the child's home. In addition to the data collected by the county, the CAG is aware of numerous studies from other communities showing that lead-based paint is a significant exposure source for children, where older housing exists, such as within the Omaha Lead Site. The CAG respectfully requests any scientific information, such as data or studies, on which your comments were based.

2) The CAG is concerned that your statements will give our families a false sense of security that after the soil is removed their children have no other lead sources to be addressed.

Because the CAG knows that lead-based paint hazards exist within Omaha homes, the CAG is concerned that your statements may have endangered our children. If families are told that the main source of lead has been addressed at their home by replacing their yard, they may not choose to take the steps necessary to protect themselves from potential lead-based paint hazards. Stating that Omaha does not have a lead-based paint

problem gives families a false sense of security and could result in children being exposed to lead from deteriorating lead-based paint.

3) The CAG is very concerned that your statements will jeopardize future efforts to obtain funding for lead-based paint hazard control.

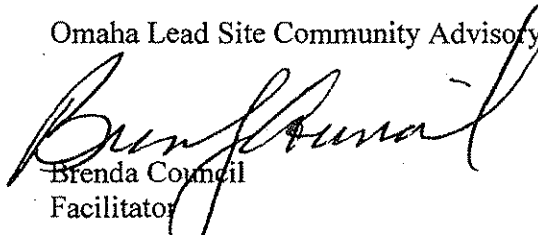
The CAG is concerned that your statement that Omaha does not have a lead-based paint problem will jeopardize future efforts to maintain the City's U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development grant, several other grants currently held in the community, and future efforts to obtain both private and public funding for Omaha's comprehensive plan. The CAG is seriously concerned that funders will reject requests for funding in Omaha for lead-based paint hazard control or for other aspects of Omaha's comprehensive plan, knowing that an EPA authority figure has publicly stated that soil is the main source of lead poisoning in Omaha.

In addition to the concerns discussed above, the CAG is troubled by your statement that, "[EPA's] yard cleanups have demonstrated significant positive results." The CAG is unaware of data or studies to support this claim. The CAG acknowledges and is pleased that childhood blood lead levels have declined over the last several years. No doubt many factors have contributed to this decline, including an increase in the number of children screened, community education and outreach, lead-based paint hazard control activities, and EPA's activities. The CAG is unaware of any information available to discern the contribution of these various factors to the decline in blood lead levels. The CAG respectfully requests any data or studies you have to support this claim.

The CAG feels that EPA should not make such careless and unsubstantiated statements. The CAG requests any data or studies available to support the claims you have made, as discussed above. Additionally, the CAG request that you publicly set the record straight. If you have any questions about this request, please contact Facilitator Brenda Council at (402) 344-7797.

Sincerely,

Omaha Lead Site Community Advisory Group



Brenda Council
Facilitator

cc: Mayor Mike Fahey
Governor Dave Heineman
Senator Chuck Hagel
Senator Ben Nelson
Congressman Lee Terry