

Roberto Moralez

My name is Roberto Moralez & I am a class C wastewater operator for the people El Paso. I have worked in wastewater for three years & have been licensed for two & a half years. I oppose the proposal by WEAT & Texas AWWA to make ethics continuing education mandatory for every operator license renewal.

If they want to offer the training, that's fine. Personally, I'd even be interested in this type of training, but to make it mandatory sends the message that operators cannot be trusted to act ethically unless someone teaches us how. People better than me have guided me in my wastewater career & this petition is an insult to them & the people who have done this job the right way for decades.

In this petition, Texas AWWA & WEAT cite three past cases: the lead contamination crisis in 2014 in Flint, Michigan, the e.coli outbreak in 2000 in Walkerton, Ontario, Canada & the water system failure in Jackson Mississippi. Only the case in Walkerton involved operators falsifying data & it was the plant manager, not the rank & file operators. Even in that case, management failed in their responsibility to ensure proper training of their operators. Flint & Jackson were failures of government leadership, funding & policy decisions, not from the operators not having ethics training. To mandate ethics training for all license renewals citing these cases lays the blame for these cases at the feet of the average operators, which is inauthentic, & again, insulting. The petition also attempts to compare water & wastewater operators to other licensed professionals, namely, engineers & land surveyors. Us operators are paid far less & hold less authority than those professions, yet they want to hold us to the same standards. This comparison is, again, inauthentic. Which leads to my next point. Most operators do not make big decisions like the ones that led to the harm of those cited cases. Supervisors & management do. Even if I were to earn my class b license, I would still follow directions from supervisors who usually hold a higher license than mine & certainly more years of experience than I do. It would be reasonable to assume their orders are correct. Supervisors are not going to order obviously unethical orders, which is why the plant manager in Walkerton doctored the results himself. The requiring of ethical training for all license renewals would target more people with the least power. Maybe there's an argument for requiring this training for plant supervisors, but that's not what this petition is suggesting.

To my next point, why would ethics training be required for license renewals & not new licenses? Are Texas AWWA & WEAT assuming new operators are ethical without training? That operators lose ethics over time? Or is this just a checkbox to look good on paper while facing less resistance in order to pass the petition?

The petition also provides no evidence that ethics mandates improve safety. The three branches of the US government require ethics training & a study done by Pew Research in 2024 show that only 16% of Americans say they trust the federal government to do the right thing most of the time. That doesn't sound like ethics training means ethical behavior to me.

I support ethics & safe water, but I do not support blaming the common operator for failures caused by leadership & politics. I do not support mandatory training that assumes we don't know right from wrong.

Thank you for considering the perspective of a common wastewater operator

With respect, Roberto Moralez
Class C Operator
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