December 1, 2012

Dear Editor,

Fluoridation of public water is clearly the best choice for Missouri citizens. Studies show that fluoridation of public water safely prevents cavities and saves money. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) hails fluoridation of drinking water as one of the greatest public health achievements of the 20th century. Our nation has over 65 years of experience in safely and effectively reducing tooth decay through community water fluoridation. The American Dental Association reports the lifetime cost of water fluoridation for an individual is less than the cost of a single dental filling. The CDC estimates that every $1 invested in this preventative measure yields approximately $38 savings in dental treatment costs. Ending public water fluoridation may reduce expenses for the public water system, but will inevitably lead to higher dental costs for community members, as individuals and families pay for tooth fillings, extractions and emergency room services. Tooth decay – a preventable infectious disease – is the single most common chronic childhood disease. Missouri communities cannot afford to end public water fluoridation.

As a non-profit advocacy organization with the mission of improving oral health for all Missourians, the Coalition for Oral Health supports the expansion of public water fluoridation. While fluoride’s effectiveness in reducing tooth decay has prompted many manufacturers to add fluoride to products such as toothpaste, mouth rinse, and some bottled waters, its preventative benefits are most cost-effective when delivered to all residents of a community through water fluoridation.

Fluoridation is the most practical way to prevent tooth decay. Public water fluoridation does not discriminate. It provides all members of the community with the ability to reduce dental disease.

Gary Harbison, Executive Director
Missouri Coalition for Oral Health