



**June 10, 2026**

Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors  
Milwaukee County Courthouse  
901 N. 9th Street  
Milwaukee, WI 53233

Dear Chairwoman Nicholson-Bovell and Members of the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors:

On behalf of Veolia, I write regarding the Intergovernmental Relations Committee's June 12 deliberations on resolution 26-496, requesting the Wisconsin Legislative Audit Bureau to conduct an audit of the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District (MMSD).

We respectfully urge the Committee to table this resolution at this time.

On June 8, MMSD's Special Commission took decisive action to initiate an independent, third-party audit process. This step reflects MMSD's commitment to transparency, accountability, and rigorous review, and it provides a credible and appropriate pathway for addressing questions regarding system operations.

In parallel, Veolia is announcing the *Milwaukee Standard*, a set of five commitments, including a contract performance and environmental compliance audit. The *Milwaukee Standard* is designed to proactively define a new era of enhanced transparency and accountability in wastewater management. For these reasons, considering or acting on resolution 26-496 would be duplicative at this time.

The enclosed fact sheet provides additional information about Veolia and its performance helping to manage one of the most complex wastewater systems in North America and delivering consistent environmental and public health outcomes for the region. We recognize and support the importance of legitimate oversight. At the same time, it is equally important that the public record be grounded in complete and accurate information. The enclosed document addresses a number of claims advanced by Common Ground, clarifying where allegations misrepresent system operations or omit critical context, and providing fact-based information about Veolia's role as a responsible steward and corporate partner in the Milwaukee community.

Given the actions taken by MMSD and the additional commitments by Veolia, requesting a separate Legislative Audit Bureau audit at this time risks duplicating efforts, creating confusion, and undermining an orderly and comprehensive review process.

For these reasons, we respectfully request that the Committee table this resolution and allow the MMSD-led independent audit, along with the complementary Veolia audit, to proceed.

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued leadership on issues important to Milwaukee County residents.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joseph D. Tackett". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Joseph Tackett  
Chief Executive Officer, Municipal Services

# Veolia in Milwaukee

A Proven, Accountable Partner — Setting the Record Straight

June 2026



For nearly two decades, Veolia has partnered with the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District (MMSD) to operate one of the most complex wastewater systems in North America, serving more than one million residents across 29 communities. Veolia's mission remains clear: protect public health, safeguard Lake Michigan, and deliver reliable environmental outcomes for the Milwaukee region.

Today, that record is being maligned by an advocacy campaign that relies on incomplete, misleading, inaccurate, and at times demonstrably false claims that do not reflect the operational record or regulatory reality, to influence and undermine a fair, competitive procurement process.

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## Trusted Partner to MMSD and the Greater Milwaukee Region

Veolia operates as an extension of MMSD's public mission, delivering essential services reliably while supporting long-term environmental goals.

- Local, largely union workforce with deep institutional knowledge
- Continued investment in system reliability, sustainability and resilience in partnership with MMSD
- Consistently delivers measurable results for ratepayers and the environment alike, applying continuous improvement and technological advancement

Veolia is not just a service provider; it is part of the Milwaukee community.

- 62,000+ residents engaged through tours and educational programming
- Significant investment in local workforce development and community partnership
- Over \$200 million spent with local and diverse suppliers, supporting economic growth

Veolia employees live, work and volunteer in the Milwaukee region, reinforcing accountability and connection to the communities served.

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## A Strong Performance Record: Backed by Data, Not Rhetoric

Veolia manages approximately 150 million gallons of wastewater daily, meeting or exceeding regulatory requirements, and the more stringent contract requirements. The system maintains **99.95% compliance** with effluent quality standards, demonstrating consistent performance. These are public, audited, and regulator-reviewed outcomes that demonstrate Veolia's performance.

## A Coordinated Campaign: Not a Good-Faith Oversight Effort

It is important to distinguish between legitimate oversight—which Veolia welcomes—and advocacy efforts aimed at damaging the company’s hard-earned reputation and influencing procurement outcomes rather than informing them.

- Common Ground has explicitly stated that its intent is to prevent Veolia from securing the next MMSD contract
- The organization has pursued broad, undefined audit demands for information that is often publicly available
- Common Ground has declined repeated opportunities for direct engagement with Veolia or MMSD, while advancing claims publicly but rejecting any opportunity for fact-based dialogue
- The timing of Common Ground’s campaign aligns with an active, competitive procurement process, creating the appearance of a coordinated effort to influence the outcome

Taken together, these actions suggest a pressure campaign built on bad faith narratives, not evidence, and one that risks undermining public confidence in the operator of a system that is performing effectively.

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## Addressing Common Ground’s Misleading Claims and Narratives

Allegations promoted by Common Ground misrepresent both the facts and the nature of wastewater system operations:

- **System Operations During Storms:** Ahead of and during every rain event, Veolia and MMSD jointly monitor conditions across the entire system, including the Deep Tunnel and treatment facilities, and coordinate real-time operations. System priorities are clear and consistent: prevent basement backups, minimize overflows, and protect water quality. When extreme conditions require system-level decisions, MMSD retains final authority.
- **Maintenance Practices:** Veolia follows rigorous industry standards and uses a proactive maintenance approach that often goes beyond manufacturer guidelines to ensure the system works reliably. Our maintenance practices are fully transparent and coordinated with MMSD. Both organizations have invested in additional maintenance and engineering staff to strengthen system reliability. Veolia completes preventative maintenance on critical assets within 45 days at a rate exceeding 95% annually.
- **Water Quality:** Effluent consistently meets or exceeds state and permit requirements, supported by decades of compliance data and public reporting, and has demonstrated a 99.95% compliance with effluent quality limits.
- **Oversight and Accountability:** Veolia’s operations are continuously reviewed and fully transparent to MMSD and state and federal regulators.

In multiple cases, Common Ground claims have simplified complex system dynamics, omitted key operational facts, or ignored publicly available data altogether.

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At a minimum, the public deserves full transparency into the motivations behind Common Ground’s efforts to disrupt the ongoing procurement and damage Veolia’s reputation after years of operating an established, high-performing system. The timing and coordination of these efforts coincide with Common Ground receiving an unprecedented influx of funding from donors that remains unexplained.

## Setting the Record Straight: Veolia & Milwaukee’s Wastewater System

### ✓ Strong compliance and water quality performance

- Treated water consistently meets or exceeds state and federal standards.
- Performance is continuously monitored, regulated, and publicly reported.

### ✓ Operations are designed to protect communities and waterways during storms

- System operations are coordinated in real time with MMSD to maximize treatment, minimize overflows, and maintain water quality.
- During extreme rain events, decisions are made to balance capacity, safety, and environmental protection within permit limits.
- When extreme conditions require system-level decisions, MMSD retains final authority.

## Specific Common Ground Allegations and Factual Responses

### **Claim: Plants are not run at full capacity during storms**

Fact: Capacity is dynamic and managed in coordination with MMSD to protect water quality and infrastructure. Running beyond safe limits would risk untreated discharge.

### **Claim: Maintenance is inadequate or “run to fail”**

Fact: Veolia follows strict, data-driven maintenance protocols, with preventive maintenance completion within 45 days exceeding 95% for critical assets.

### **Claim: Treated water quality is declining**

Fact: Effluent consistently meets regulatory limits, with long-term compliance data confirming strong performance.

### **Claim: Veolia operates without sufficient oversight**

Fact: Operations are subject to continuous oversight by MMSD, the Wisconsin DNR, and federal regulators, with full transparency of records.

### **Claim: Past issues or litigation indicate mismanagement**

Fact: Claims about other cities omit key facts—many disputes were resolved without findings of wrongdoing, and Veolia stands by its operational record.

## Transparency and Accountability Are Built Into the System

MMSD retains full access to operational and maintenance data. Performance is tracked through public reporting, permit compliance, and regulatory review. The system operates under ongoing local, state, and federal oversight—not in isolation.

- Overflow events are primarily driven by extreme rainfall and regional infrastructure constraints, not operational mismanagement
- Treatment capacity depends on real-time conditions, system design, and regulatory requirements—not a single fixed number
- MMSD continues to invest in major infrastructure upgrades to improve long-term capacity and performance