



Empowering Local Water Solutions *through* National Support

While the nation's drinking water, wastewater, water reuse, and stormwater sectors acknowledge recent efforts by Congress and the Administration to advance our nation's water infrastructure, it is clear that significant challenges remain. To ensure communities across the U.S. can continue to rehabilitate and upgrade their critical water infrastructure affordably, we call on Congress to commit to heightened and sustained support.

Continued robust federal commitment is vital to build on recent momentum and aid communities, regardless of size or location, to address complex water challenges, including:

- Maintaining and updating aging infrastructure, rising operational costs, supply chain issues, and labor shortages;
- Tackling water contamination and compliance with regulations, including those for PFAS, new pollutants, and nutrient management; and
- Securing climate adaptation, resilience, and cybersecurity measures.

Congress and the Administration can further assist communities by supporting the following tools, policies, and resources needed to ensure water utilities can continue to fulfill their core mission of protecting public health and the environment while supporting local economic growth.

Amplify Essential Funding for Aging Water Infrastructure

The Infrastructure Investment & Jobs Act (IIJA) represents a landmark federal commitment to water infrastructure. However, the reality is that the authorized funds fall significantly short of the water sector's vast needs. Most federal water program investments hinge on yearly appropriations by Congress, leaving critical projects in limbo.

Without complete appropriations, local utilities and their customers face a financial strain that hinders essential water infrastructure investments and compliance with federal regulations. The current funding trajectory simply cannot sustain the growing demands on the water sector.

Protect the Public and Utilities from Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS)

Removing PFAS from drinking water sources as part of the wastewater treatment and stormwater management process is technically challenging and highly costly.

- Drinking water utilities will need to invest more than \$50 billion to install and operate treatment technology over the next 20 years to comply with new PFAS standards. And operational costs for individual clean water utilities will increase by up to 60% as a direct result of new PFAS regulations.
- Therefore, the water sector advocates for source control as the first line of defense to prevent PFAS from entering ecosystems.
- Congress and the EPA's approach to PFAS remediation must incorporate accurate cost estimates and water sector feedback to drive effective, implementable policy. Regulations must be evidence-based and pinpoint the origins of PFAS to ensure the responsible parties pay for clean-up efforts and are held liable for the contamination from which they profited.

Environmental organizations, Congress, and EPA agree – those who caused PFAS contamination should fund the removal of these persistent chemicals from our water and soil.

- Theoretically, the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) serves to ensure that those responsible for releases of hazardous substances finance their cleanup. In practice however, without explicit protection from CERCLA, water utilities will be held liable for PFAS contamination they had no hand in creating.
- Therefore, it is imperative that Congress protect drinking water, wastewater, water recycling, stormwater utilities, and their treatment technology providers from CERCLA liability relating to PFAS cleanups, and instead adopt measures to place those costs on the responsible polluters.

Ensure Affordable Water Services for Low-Income Households

As service costs escalate, water and wastewater charges in numerous communities are outpacing inflation and income growth, causing low-income households to allocate a growing share of their income to water services. Water affordability is a significant challenge for more than 20 million U.S. households. At the same time, countless disadvantaged communities struggle to make needed investments while keeping rates affordable.

- Congress must create a permanent low-income water customer assistance program to help utilities maintain aging infrastructure, while keeping services affordable for low-income households; and
- Provide oversight of EPA's actions to address affordability concerns.

Advance Regulatory Flexibility and Reform

Communities are confronting rising expenses for regulatory compliance alongside complex water quality concerns. Targeted regulatory reforms can assist communities in managing surging costs and affordability issues, without compromising the delivery of exceptional public health and environmental safeguards.

Advance Water Research

Water research is helping solve some of the most pressing challenges for the water sector, such as aging infrastructure, emerging contaminants, extreme weather, water scarcity, and significant shifts in population. Research and development aimed at finding cost-effective solutions to these challenges not only creates more resilient and effective water systems, but also creates new jobs and supports thriving communities nationwide. These solutions also result in improved public health and safety and promote equitable solutions throughout the country. Continued federal support and funding for water research programs is vital to helping communities and utilities.

Protect Pipes from Wipes

The mismanagement of disposable wipes, including those inaccurately labeled as 'flushable,' poses a severe threat to our sewage systems. The improper disposal of such wipes leads to clogs, significant damage to wastewater treatment equipment, and presents substantial health and safety hazards.

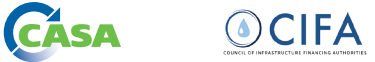
It is imperative that Congress mandates explicit 'Do Not Flush' warnings on all non-flushable wipe packaging. Moreover, federal agencies should be endowed with the authority to enforce stringent standards on products advertised as 'flushable,' ensuring they break down with the same efficacy as conventional toilet paper. This will not only protect our infrastructure but will also safeguard the health of our water professionals and promote environmental sustainability.

Provide Tax Credits to Encourage Sustainable Water Systems

Energy generation, agricultural production, and other industrial operations account for the vast majority of water consumed in the United States each year. Few incentives exist to support the sustainable management of water in the private sector.

- Congress should establish tax credits to help industry use water sustainably, including through the adoption of water recycling technologies and systems.

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