



November 20, 2017

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
S-128, The Capitol
US Senate
Washington DC, 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Appropriations
S-146A, The Capitol
US Senate
Washington DC, 20510

The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen
Chairman
House Committee on Appropriations
H-305, The Capitol
US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth H.O.B.
US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

RE: FY18 Federal Funding for Water Sector Priorities

Dear Chairman Cochran and Ranking Member Leahy/Chairman Frelinghuysen and Ranking Member Lowey;

As Congress works to finalize the Fiscal Year 2018 (FY18) spending bills, the water sector organizations co-signing this letter strongly urge you to support continued federal investment in water infrastructure, geographic watershed and state grant programs, water systems security, and water research programs. Support for these programs is essential to safeguard public health, protect the environment, promote economic growth, and ensure community resiliency.

The importance of federal programs that support water infrastructure funding for communities across the nation cannot be overstated. Core programs such as the Clean Water (CW) and Drinking Water (DW) State Revolving Funds (SRFs) and the new Water Infrastructure Finance & Innovation Act (WIFIA) program provide funding for critical drinking water and wastewater projects, many of which are in communities that need access to low-interest loans in order to not overburden lower income ratepayers and remain in compliance with federal and state regulations. At a minimum, Congress should maintain funding for the CWSRF and DWSRF at FY17 levels. The FY17 levels are already below funding levels in previous fiscal years, and below our original FY18 funding request of \$2.8 billion for the CWSRF and \$1.8 billion for the DWSRF. Additionally, the WIFIA program should be funded at the FY18 authorized level of \$45 million, which the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) indicates has the potential to be leveraged into upwards of \$4.5 billion in funding for water infrastructure projects.

Another important federal water infrastructure funding program we support is the Bureau of Reclamation's Title XVI program, which is the only federal program that provides funding

specifically for water reuse projects. Communities are increasingly turning to water recycling to meet water supply and water quality challenges to ensure a reliable source of safe water. Title XVI is a successful federal cost-share program that since 1992 has provided \$639 million for water reuse projects and leveraged \$2.4 billion in non-federal funding. However, the program is oversubscribed with a huge backlog of authorized projects totaling hundreds of millions of dollars. This need will only increase as communities nationwide increasingly face water management challenges and look to water reuse as a critical component of their water resource management portfolio. Thus, we urge you to include robust funding for the Title XVI program for FY18 of at least \$50 million.

Our organizations remain steadfast in our support for maintaining funding for geographic watershed protection programs, such as the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) and the Chesapeake Bay Initiative, and the categorical grant programs that support State efforts to work with utilities to improve source water protection and receiving water conditions. These programs should be funded at FY17 levels or higher. By providing this level of funding, Congress will be protecting the gains made to restore watersheds across the nation that are still faced with legacy problems as well as emerging challenges.

Additionally, the USEPA Office of Water's Water Security Division (WSD) provides valuable resources and support for water agencies to help them prepare for a host of natural and man-made threats that potentially could disrupt or destroy critical drinking water and wastewater infrastructure. Nearly all of the 53,000 community drinking water utilities and 16,000 wastewater utilities in the U.S. rely upon the tools, training, workshops, and educational guides provided by WSD. The program was funded in FY17 at \$10.2 million, which is the same amount we request for FY18.

Finally, we also urge Congress to continue to support water research and technology development programs coordinated among a variety of federal agencies, including the USEPA, U.S. Geological Survey, Department of Energy, National Science Foundation, and the Bureau of Reclamation. In particular, we request full funding of the National Priorities Water Research program at \$5 million to support research of critical importance to the water sector. The data and technologies obtained through these research programs help address some of the nation's most pressing water quality and supply challenges. Continued research funding is critical to the quality of life for communities across the U.S., cost-effective infrastructure repair and replacement, and the business and economic advantages it gives our nation in the global marketplace.

We appreciate your leadership on supporting water infrastructure investment, and look forward to continued engagement with Congress as you complete the FY18 Appropriations process.

Sincerely,

Water Environment Federation

National Association of Clean Water Agencies

Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies

WaterReuse Association

US Water Alliance

Water & Wastewater Equipment Manufacturers Association