



Ensuring the Future of Our Nation's Water Infrastructure:

# A Call to Action for the 119th Congress



**The 119th Congress can address these issues by enacting policies, providing tools and resources that empower local water utilities to fulfill their mission of protecting public health and the environment while supporting economic growth.**

## Strengthen Funding for Aging Water Infrastructure

The bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) made an historic investment in water infrastructure, helping local utilities make capital investments in water supplies, treatment, and conveyance while keeping costs more affordable for ratepayers. While customer rates cover the majority of the costs of providing water services in the U.S., federal funding and financing plays a critical role in helping utilities advance infrastructure projects. However, future funding levels are uncertain and many key program authorizations will expire after Fiscal Year 2026.

- The 119th Congress must reauthorize the State Revolving Funds, Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA), the Title XVI-WIIN Water Reuse Grants Program, and a suite of expiring IIJA water infrastructure funding programs.
- We urge leadership and appropriators to prioritize robust annual appropriations for these programs to advance investment in water across the country and ensure rural and urban communities alike have access to clean, safe water.

The nation's drinking water, wastewater, water reuse, and stormwater sectors commend past efforts by Congress and the Administration to improve our nation's water infrastructure. However, significant challenges remain. To ensure all communities—urban and rural—can affordably maintain and upgrade their critical water infrastructure, we call on the 119th Congress to commit to heightened and sustained federal support.

**A bipartisan commitment is vital to support communities addressing pressing water challenges, including:**

- **Providing affordable water services** in the face of aging infrastructure, rising operational costs, supply chain disruptions, and labor shortages;
- **Navigating a rapidly evolving regulatory environment** on issues ranging from emerging contaminants like per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) to nutrient management;
- **Ensuring resilience** to threats such as drought, flooding, and cyber attacks; and
- **Advancing water research** to develop innovative, cost-effective solutions to meet critical water challenges.

## Address PFAS Responsibly

The water sector faces significant challenges in managing PFAS contamination, which is both technically complex and financially burdensome. The looming costs under the Safe Drinking Water Act and Clean Water Act are enormous and will significantly impact ratepayers. Drinking water utilities face annual costs of as much as \$7.5 billion to comply with EPA's new drinking water standards for PFAS. Clean water utilities are also facing significant operational cost increases.

- Congress must prioritize source control measures that will help reduce the amount of PFAS entering water systems and the environment.
- Federal PFAS policies must be grounded in accurate cost estimates and informed by water sector expertise to ensure effective, implementable solutions.
- Regulations must hold polluters—not local water utilities—financially responsible for cleanup costs. In particular, without explicit protection under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA), water utilities and their ratepayers will unfairly bear the costs of cleaning up environmental PFAS pollution. Congress must enact liability protections for drinking water, wastewater, stormwater utilities, and technology providers while holding polluters accountable.



## Ensure Affordable Water Services for All

Water and wastewater costs in many communities outpace inflation and income growth, putting disproportionate pressure on low-income households.

- The 119th Congress should establish a permanent low-income water assistance program to help utilities modernize aging infrastructure while keeping rates affordable for vulnerable families.
- Congress must also provide oversight of EPA actions to ensure they address affordability concerns and do not impose unsustainable financial burdens on utilities.

## Advance Regulatory Flexibility and Reform

Communities across the country face rising regulatory compliance costs while grappling with increasingly complex water quality challenges. A transparent, science-based regulatory framework which considers costs and benefits is essential to enable water utilities to meet their obligations effectively while ensuring affordability for ratepayers.

## Invest in Water Research for Innovative Solutions

Federal investment in water research is critical to addressing new threats to water quality, scarcity, and affordability. Water research offers a proactive approach to tackling future challenges, fostering long-term sustainability, and promoting the competitiveness of U.S. water systems on a global scale.

- Congress should maintain robust funding for water research programs to develop innovative, cost-effective solutions that enhance public health, safety, and water system resilience.
- Investing in water research will create new jobs and ensure equitable access to modern water systems nationwide.

## Protect Sewer Systems from Improper Wipes Disposal

The mismanagement of disposable wipes, including falsely labeled “flushable” products, imposes significant burdens on wastewater systems. Improperly flushed wipes cause clogs, damage expensive equipment, and create health and safety hazards for water utility workers. This issue costs utilities millions of dollars annually in repairs and operational disruptions.

- Congress should require clear, standardized “Do Not Flush” labeling on all non-flushable wipes to reduce consumer confusion and improper disposal.
- Federal agencies must be empowered to establish and enforce rigorous, science-based flushability standards for products marketed as “flushable”.

## Support Tax Incentives to Ensure Long-Term Water Supplies and Economic Development

Industrial and agricultural operations account for most water consumption in the United States, yet few incentives exist to encourage sustainable water use in the private sector.

- Congress should establish tax credits to support water recycling, reuse technologies, and conservation practices in industry and agriculture, ensuring long-term, reliable water supplies while supporting economic growth.
- Congress should eliminate tax burdens on water conservation rebates offered by local utilities, thereby incentivizing more consumers to preserve critical water resources.
- Congress must preserve the tax exemption for municipal bonds, which are a critical tool for financing municipal water infrastructure.

## 2025 Water Week Partners



# The Time for Action is Now

The 119th Congress has an opportunity to build on bipartisan achievements, secure our water infrastructure, and protect public health. By addressing the issues outlined here, Congress can ensure that our nation's water systems remain resilient, affordable, and effective for generations to come.