

Invest in water, jobs, health, and our economy

NOW'S THE TIME FOR THE WATER AFFORDABILITY, TRANSPARENCY, EQUITY AND RELIABILITY (WATER) ACT

THE STATE OF U.S. PUBLIC WATER

For more than two centuries, robust public water systems across the U.S. have been fundamental in meeting people's most basic needs, improving public health, and providing the basis for a strong economy. But today, aging pipes and decades of declining federal support for infrastructure are colliding with the growing need for access to clean, safe water at rates all people can afford.

As federal funding for water infrastructure has declined precipitously over the past 40 years, our drinking water systems—and people—are paying the price. And lead crises in places like Flint and Pittsburgh are just the tip of the iceberg.

Private water corporations like Veolia and Suez have marketed water privatization, including in the form of so-called public-private partnerships (PPPs), as a solution to cities' water woes. But case after case shows that privatizing public water is risky business, and can lead to:

- Significant rate hikes.
- Labor cuts and abuses.
- Dangerous cost-cutting that puts public health in jeopardy.
- Failure to invest in necessary infrastructure upgrades.
- Serious health and safety violations.

It's clear: Rather than turn to privatization and PPPs, we need more direct federal investment in our public water systems.

THE PUBLIC WATER SOLUTION WE NEED

Thankfully, a solution exists to reinvest in our public water infrastructure, create good jobs, and advance access to our human right to water across the U.S.: the Water Affordability, Transparency, Equity and Reliability (WATER) Act (H.R.1417 and S.611).

Recently introduced in the 116th Congress, the WATER Act provides a comprehensive approach for overhauling our water systems through direct federal investment, while creating the potential for nearly a



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million jobs and advancing water justice for the millions of people who are facing a water contamination or affordability crisis in our country.

Key provisions of the WATER Act

- **Create a water trust fund by raising the corporate income tax rate.**

The WATER Act will create a WATER Trust Fund of up to \$35 billion per year in dedicated funding for our water infrastructure, including robust investments in the Drinking Water and Clean Water State Revolving Fund (SRF) programs, by rolling back a portion of the Trump administration's corporate tax cuts.

- **Address the growing lead crisis.**

The WATER Act will expand a grant program to replace lead pipes in public schools to ensure lead-free drinking water for our children, as well as provide grants to homeowners to replace lead service lines on their property.

- **Protect our workers and help create good jobs.**

The WATER Act will create the potential for an estimated 700,000 to 945,000 jobs. It will require the use of U.S.-made iron and steel on water system projects. It also applies prevailing wage law and encourages union labor, acknowledging that workers are often the hardest hit by water privatization.

- **Promote affordable water service for all.**

The WATER Act will require the EPA to produce guidance on water service affordability and to coordinate a study about water shutoffs and affordability, discrimination, and civil rights violations by water and sewer service providers. It also prioritizes financial support for communities which have historically been disenfranchised—disproportionately, low-income communities and communities of color.

- **Provide assistance for rural, small, and indigenous communities.**

The WATER Act will dramatically expand funding for technical assistance for rural and small municipalities to improve their drinking water, well, and wastewater systems while creating a new grant program for maintaining and improving septic systems. Additionally, the WATER Act will dedicate 3 percent of Drinking Water SRF funds to grants for indigenous communities.

- **Address PFAS water contamination.**

The WATER Act will allow the Drinking Water SRF to fund projects to address drinking water contamination from per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). It will provide support to update treatment systems or find alternative water supplies when community water systems have PFAS contamination, and provide grants for filtration systems for households with contaminated wells.

- **Prioritize public control of water.**

The WATER Act will support our public water systems by restricting Drinking Water SRF dollars to publicly run systems and small locally owned systems. That means these critical funds will be invested in our public infrastructure rather than subsidizing private profit.

SUPPORT THE WATER ACT

Millions of people across the U.S. lack access to clean and safe water at rates they can afford. Cities cannot address these challenges on their own, and water privatization has proven time and again to be a false solution. It's time for the federal government to act to restore the public water systems that have always been the backbone of public health and the U.S. economy. The WATER Act does that and more. You can advance water justice by joining the tens of thousands of people across the U.S., more than 140 organizations, and dozens of members of Congress in endorsing the WATER Act today.