



Water Infrastructure For All Campaign Toolkit

Addressing the Water Infrastructure Crisis in the U.S.:
Investing in Programs Providing Safe Drinking Water
& Improving Outdated Water Systems Infrastructure

The Environmental Justice Coalition

Written by: Aaron Bhattachan, Director of Public Health Advocacy

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Background On the U.S. Water Infrastructure Crisis

While the water infrastructure crisis only recently received a national spotlight, the United States has been facing this issue since the late 1940s. In 1948, the Federal Water Pollution Control Act became the first major U.S. law to address the problem of water pollution. As a result of the general public becoming more engaged with the nation's water infrastructure, the Clean Water Act was passed in 1972. With the passage of this act, came the following:

- The basic structure for regulating pollutant discharges into US waters was established.
- The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was given the ability to undertake pollution control measures, such as setting wastewater regulations for industry.
- Existing rules for establishing water quality standards for all pollutants in surface waterways were maintained.
- It made it illegal to dump any pollution into navigable waters from a point source unless a permit was secured under its rules.
- Construction grants were used to fund the construction of sewage treatment plants.
- Recognized the importance of preparing to solve water pollution's serious risks.

Today, water transportation infrastructure in the United States consists of approximately 2.2 million miles of pipeline that was built decades ago. With inadequate, aging water infrastructure, approximately 23.1 million Americans lack access to clean, safe, and affordable drinking water. In 2021, the United States received a C- in the drinking-water category of the American Society of Civil Engineers Report Card (Infrastructure Report Card, 2021). Such reports detailing clean water violations and water testing results often receive little to no attention and are largely inaccessible to the people they directly impact.

Thus, it is no surprise that drinking water is contaminated on a daily basis as a byproduct of unsustainable lead pipeline industries and passive government oversight on U.S. water infrastructure. In 2019, more than 30 million Americans lived in areas where water systems failed to meet water safety standards. According to a study by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), approximately 22% of public water systems today contain one or more contaminants that are at levels dangerous to human health. This poses a threat to the health of the 105 million people that rely on these public water systems and highlights the need for sustainable water infrastructure development in the United States.

The following are the most common pollutants (Nabers, 2021):

- Lead: intoxicates the entire human body system.
- Mercury: Creates adverse effects on the digestive, nervous, immune, and respiratory systems.
- Chlorine byproducts: Causes human body irritations and develops a higher risk of cancer.

- Haloacetic acids (HAAs): Causes DNA damage, inverse developmental effects, and an increased risk of cancer.
- Arsenic: Causes an increased risk of cancer.

This toolkit will help explain and contextualize the Drinking Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Act of 2021 and provide resources for you to join the fight for clean water in the U.S..

Summary of the Drinking Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Act of 2021

The Drinking Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Act of 2021 was approved with an overwhelming bipartisan Senate vote of 89-2. It is a vital step toward ensuring that everyone in the United States has access to clean, safe, and affordable drinking water. It authorizes greater funding to improve current infrastructure and implement new wastewater initiatives such as the Wastewater Efficiency Grant Pilot Program which “awards grants to owners or operators of publicly owned treatment works to carry out projects that create or improve waste-to-energy systems”(Duckworth, 2021). While more work needs to be done, the act is a step in the right direction for the repair of the U.S.’s aging water infrastructure.

The bill authorizes funds for replacing lead service lines, reauthorizes the Drinking Water and Clean Water State Revolving Funds, launches an EPA pilot program for low-income water assistance, and authorizes funding for rural and disadvantaged communities. There is hope for continued bipartisan support of water infrastructure in future legislation and further investment by Congress (Coie, 2021).

While the current bill represents a step forward, the magnitude of the task ahead cannot be overstated. A sustained effort will be required to ensure that everyone has access to clean water, particularly low-income and BIPOC communities, who have historically suffered from polluted water sources and faulty water infrastructure.

There is also an urgent need to significantly increase overall funding to meet the “estimated \$750 billion to \$1 trillion or more in nationwide need” for clean water (Berndt, 2021). Much of these funds will be directed to disadvantaged communities in the form of grants. With these grants, school-lead programs can be strengthened and expanded on, and further investment in green and natural infrastructure is made possible. These improvements would be extremely beneficial to communities, not only in terms of public health and a clean environment, but also in terms of generating hundreds of thousands of job opportunities.

Details of the Drinking Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Act of 2021

The Drinking Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Act was introduced by Senator Tammy Duckworth [D-IL] in the House of Representatives on March 23, 2021. Its purpose is to “support programs in order to provide safe drinking water or treat wastewater, such as sewer overflows or stormwater” (Duckworth, 2021). The bill has been passed in the Senate and is now moving onto the third step of the legislative process. The act holistically addresses the sources of the U.S. Water Infrastructure crisis within the United States in 2 separate titles, each with their respective summaries below.

1. The first section is “**Drinking Water,**” which was introduced into the Senate on April 29, 2021. This section authorizes \$35 million in annual funding for EPA technical assistance and grants for public water system emergencies fiscal year 2022 (FY2022) through fiscal year 2026 (FY2026), \$15 million in annual funding for small public water systems for FY2022 through FY2026, and \$2.4 billion in annual funding for the Drinking Water State Revolving Loan Fund. This section also authorizes funding for Assistance for Small and Disadvantaged Communities in the amounts of \$70 million for FY2022, \$80 million for FY2023, \$100 million for FY2024, \$120 million for FY2025, and \$140 million for FY2026, as well as \$25 million for FY2022 through FY2026 for the Drinking Water System Infrastructure Resilience and Sustainability program, with a 90 percent federal match. This section also requires the EPA to conduct a study on community water needs, including those in rural areas, and to make recommendations on how to provide more affordable and safe drinking water and wastewater. This section establishes a pilot program to provide grants to develop and implement programs to assist low-income households in maintaining access to drinking water and wastewater treatment, facilitates grants to connect households to public water infrastructure, and authorizes a \$20 million annual budget for the program. Several initiatives to reduce lead in drinking water infrastructure are made possible by the legislation, including a \$10 million pilot program to assist communities in using mapping data. Finally, the section authorizes \$30 million in funding to address lead in school drinking water systems in FY2022, \$35 million in FY2023, \$40 million in FY2024, \$45 million in FY2025, and \$50 million in FY2026 (Blunt, 2021).
2. The second section is “**Clean Water**” and this was introduced into the Senate on April 29, 2021. This section permits grant money under the Federal Water Pollution Control Act at a rate of \$75 million per year from FY2022 to FY2026, establishes a pilot program to facilitate grants for waste-to-energy projects, and authorizes \$20 million per year for the program from FY2022 to FY2026. This section also amends a pilot program for substitute water source projects, designates \$25 million annually for FY2022 through FY2026, and authorizes \$280 million in funding for sewer overflow and wastewater

reuse municipal grants for FY2022 through FY2026, with a focus on rural neighborhoods. This paper directs EPA to establish a clean water infrastructure resiliency and sustainability program to provide grants to protect water systems from weather events and cybersecurity threats, authorizes the program at \$25 million per year for FY2022 through FY2026, and directs EPA to establish a circuit rider program for publicly owned treatment works. Authorizes \$10 million per year for the program from FY2022 to FY2026, and directs the EPA to establish an efficiency grant program for small publicly owned treatment works to support water and energy efficiency in disadvantaged communities and rural areas with populations of less than 10,000 people. This section also authorizes funding for the Clean Water State Revolving Loan Funds in the amounts of \$2.4 billion for FY2022; \$2.75 billion for FY2023; \$3 billion for FY2024; and \$3.25 billion for FY2025 and FY2026, reauthorizes the Innovative Water Infrastructure Workforce Development program at \$5 million per year for FY2022 through FY2026, and creates a federal interagency working group to report on the program. Members of the EPA, the Department of Education, the Department of Labor, the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and other relevant federal agencies will make up the group. Finally, this section directs the EPA to establish a water data-sharing pilot program designed to ensure the collaboration of data and information regarding water quality and demands between state and local governments, authorizes the program at \$15 million per year for FY2022 through FY2026, and reauthorizes the Water Infrastructure Financing and Innovation Act program at \$50 million per year for FY2022 through FY2026 (Blunt, 2021).

Templates to Contact Legislators about Supporting the Drinking Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Act of 2021

How to Find Your Representatives and Senators

To locate your state's US representative's website and contact information, click on the link here: <https://www.house.gov/representatives>. Search for your state and congressional district. If you do not know your congressional district, you can enter your ZIP code and find your representative here: <https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative>.

To locate your state's Senator's website and contact information, click on the link here: <https://www.senate.gov/senators/senators-contact.htm>. Select your state from the "Choose a state" drop-down menu. Remember that each state has only two senators.

Email Template

Copy the email template below and enter all of the information that pertains to you and your state in the bracketed portions of the text.

Dear [Title] [Last Name],

My name is [Name], and I am emailing you to ask for your support of the Drinking Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Act of 2021 and to consider cosponsoring the act in Congress if you have not already. Drinking water infrastructure in the United States is primarily made up of pipeline systems that were built decades ago. This infrastructure is aging and failing to provide clean and safe water to millions of people. Recently, the United States received a C- in the drinking-water category of the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) - 2021 report card.

I sincerely believe that your support of the Drinking Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Act of 2021 will ensure vital improvements to aging infrastructure and increase access to clean, affordable water for millions across the nation.

Thank you in advance for your time, consideration, and support of the Drinking Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Act.

Sincerely,
[Name]

Phone Template

When gathering the contact information about your House Representative and Senator, note down their office's cell phone number, which can be used to call them. If you choose to call, you can use the phone calling template below to speak to their office and arrange a meeting with your House Representative or Senator.

Hello, my name is [insert your name], and I am a constituent from [insert congressional district or city and state]. I am calling to ask [senator or representative's name] to support the Drinking Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Act of 2021 and to consider cosponsoring the act in Congress if you have not already. Drinking water infrastructure in the United States is primarily made up of pipeline systems that were built decades ago. This infrastructure is aging and failing to provide clean and safe water to millions of people. Recently, the United States received a C- in the drinking-water category of the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) - 2021 report card.

I sincerely believe that your support of the Drinking Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Act of 2021 will ensure vital improvements to aging infrastructure and increase access to clean, affordable water for millions across the nation.

Please vote in favor of passing the Drinking Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Act to the next stage in the legislative process. Thank you for your time, consideration, and commitment to developing the Water Infrastructure in the U.S.

Other Ways to Support the Drinking Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Act of 2021

Reports to read

- “Meeting the Moment: The Urgency and Opportunity to Invest in Water Systems” <http://uswateralliance.org/>
- “America’s Infrastructure gets a C-” <https://www.americanrivers.org/2021/03/americas-infrastructure-gets-a-c/>
- “Water Infrastructure and Resiliency Finance Center” <https://www.epa.gov/waterfinancecenter>
- “Drinking Water” <https://infrastructurereportcard.org/cat-item/drinking-water/>
- “Congress’s Stealth Water Infrastructure Deal” <https://www.circleofblue.org/2021/world/congresss-stealth-water-infrastructure-deal/>
- “The aging water infrastructure: Out of sight, out of mind?” <https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/economy/issues-by-the-numbers/us-aging-water-infrastructure-investment-opportunities.html>
- “Chronic Underinvestment In America’s Water Infrastructure Puts The Economy At Risk” <https://www.asce.org/templates/press-release-detail.aspx?id=38679>

Videos and Websites

- [10 facts about water policy and infrastructure in the US](#)
- [Addressing America's Aging Water Infrastructure](#)
- [The hidden role of water infrastructure](#)
- [America's Water Infrastructure Is a Ticking Time Bomb](#)
- [Why Is America's Water Infrastructure Failing](#)
- [America's Failing Water Infrastructure](#)

Places to Donate

- Charity:water <https://www.charitywater.org/>
- Water.org <https://water.org/>
- Generosity.org <https://generosity.org/>
- Pure Water for the World <https://www.purewaterfortheworld.org/>
- Blood:Water <https://www.bloodwater.org/>
- Water for Good <https://waterforgood.org/>

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Get Involved with the Environmental Justice Coalition

The Environmental Justice Coalition is the first grassroots, youth-led movement mobilizing the next generation of activists in the fight for intersectional environmental justice and uplifting BIPOC, low-income, and marginalized communities most impacted by environmental racism and injustices through political advocacy, policy development, community organizing, educational initiatives, and content creation. We are working towards a future in which there is fair and equal treatment, equitable distribution of resources, and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexuality, or income level in the development, implementation, and enforcement of sustainable environmental laws, regulations, and policies on the local, state, and federal level.

For position descriptions, eligibility requirements, sample projects, and application forms, please visit our [Job Board](#) to learn more about joining our executive team, enrolling in our fellowship program, or becoming a staff writer and reach out to team@environmentaljusticecoalition.org with any questions!

Follow the Movement

Website: www.environmentaljusticecoalition.org

Instagram: [@environmentaljusticecoalition](https://www.instagram.com/environmentaljusticecoalition)

Facebook: [Environmental Justice Coalition](https://www.facebook.com/EnvironmentalJusticeCoalition)

LinkedIn: [Environmental Justice Coalition](https://www.linkedin.com/company/EnvironmentalJusticeCoalition)

Medium: medium.com/environmental-justice-coalition

Twitter: [@envjustco](https://twitter.com/envjustco)

Linktree: linktr.ee/environmentaljusticecoalition