



ASSOCIATION OF  
METROPOLITAN  
WATER AGENCIES

July 15, 2009

The Honorable Earl Blumenauer  
Member of Congress  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Blumenauer:

On behalf of the Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies (AMWA), thank you for introducing the “Water Protection and Reinvestment Act.” AMWA is encouraged that this legislation pays special attention to the needs of urban drinking water systems that are currently underserved by federal infrastructure financing programs, without relying on the creation of a federal water tax that would lessen the ability of individual water systems to establish appropriate rate structures to finance their own local infrastructure needs.

According to EPA’s 2007 Drinking Water Needs Survey, community water systems that serve more than 100,000 people supply drinking water to forty-five percent of the American population and represent thirty-six percent of the nation’s drinking water investment need. However, since the creation of the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund in 1996, these metropolitan systems have only received twenty-three percent of federal drinking water infrastructure funding assistance.

The “Water Protection and Reinvestment Act” would address this inequity by directing states – to the maximum extent practicable – to give priority for the use of at least one-third of their annual share of drinking water dollars provided by the new program to infrastructure improvement projects at metropolitan utilities serving more than 100,000 people. This solution allows urban utilities to fairly compete for funds, while also preserving the Safe Drinking Water Act standards that target the majority of assistance to communities facing the most severe public health challenges.

AMWA also supports sections of the legislation creating new grant programs that will help local communities comply with federal facility security mandates, adapt to the impacts of global climate change, and establish drug take-back programs that will prevent pharmaceutical residues from entering the water supply. Each of these responsibilities will pose numerous and expensive challenges to local communities and the water systems that serve them, so AMWA believes it is appropriate for the federal government to help utilities take these steps to protect and preserve water quality in the face of future uncertainty.

While the “Water Protection and Reinvestment Act” would create a trust fund to raise dollars necessary to finance these important infrastructure improvements, AMWA believes Congress should consider various financing mechanisms to address the nation’s infrastructure needs. In addition to a trust fund, options include an

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*Executive Director*

The Honorable Earl Blumenauer  
July 15, 2009  
Page 2

infrastructure bank, more robust municipal bond insurance, and increased appropriations for existing infrastructure funding programs. AMWA believes that each of these options should be studied carefully, and that the ultimate solution to the water infrastructure funding challenge must not discourage individual water systems from responsibly planning and budgeting for the repair and replacement of their own water infrastructure.

The “Water Protection and Reinvestment Act” represents a major step toward addressing the water infrastructure needs of both urban and rural communities, so AMWA is glad to see it introduced into this important debate. The Association and its members look forward to working with you as this legislation moves forward in Congress.

Sincerely,



Diane VanDe Hei  
Executive Director