

November 23, 2020

AMWA reiterates need for water-focused COVID aid

November 23, 2020 at 5:00 AM

AMWA joined five other water and wastewater sector organizations last week in requesting the inclusion of targeted water sector programs in any COVID-19 relief package that is formulated before the end of the year.

In a letter (<https://www.amwa.net/letter/letter-congress-covid-aid-water-utilities-and-ratepayers>) sent to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, AMWA and the other organizations said the next COVID package should include funding to help low-income households affected by the pandemic keep up with their water and wastewater bills, similar to a program approved by the House earlier this year. The groups went on to say that Congress should not impose a federal ban on water or wastewater service disconnections, as most water systems have voluntarily paused service disconnections in response to the pandemic. If lawmakers nevertheless move forward with a federal disconnection moratorium, the letter said it should be limited to the duration of the COVID-19 public health emergency and accompanied by assistance dollars for customers or utilities.

Finally, the organizations requested that local water and wastewater systems be made explicitly eligible to receive a portion of any additional federal COVID-19 relief aid that is offered to state or local governments. Water and wastewater systems would use these dollars to offset revenue losses that have been suffered as a result of the pandemic.

Speaker Pelosi and Leader McConnell may attempt to negotiate a new COVID-19 response and economic stimulus package before the end of the year, but both sides remain far apart on the total price tag. If progress is not apparent over the next few weeks, a deal would likely have to wait until after the new Congress is seated in January.

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