

November 22, 2021

House approves social spending bill with additional water spending

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Last week the House of Representatives narrowly passed a \$1.75 trillion social spending bill that includes (<https://www.amwa.net/article/additional-lead-service-line-funds-water-ratepayer-aid-included-democrats-social-spending>) more than \$10 billion for several water-related priorities. These funds would come in addition to the nearly \$50 billion in drinking water and wastewater spending that was enacted last week through a bipartisan infrastructure bill (<https://www.amwa.net/article/after-long-delay-house-approves-infrastructure-bill-billions-drinking-water>).

The latest legislation, the Build Back Better Act (H.R. 5376 (<https://rules.house.gov/sites/democrats.rules.house.gov/files/BILLS-117HR5376RH-RCP117-17.pdf>)), is a Democratic-backed budget reconciliation bill focused on a variety of social spending priorities. Tucked among them is \$9 billion in grants to address lead in drinking water through several EPA programs established (<https://www.amwa.net/article/wiin-act-authorizes-lsl-grants-allows-wifia-application-fee-financing>) with AMWA's support in 2016, focused on lead service line replacements and replacing outdated drinking water fountains in schools. Another \$970 million would be made available through USDA for lead service line replacement projects in rural areas. The new lead remediation dollars would be appropriated immediately and would remain available through the 2026 fiscal year.

The bill would also provide \$225 million for new EPA grants to states and tribes to reduce the water rates and arrearages of low-income households and \$100 million for the Bureau of Reclamation to provide funding assistance for large-scale water reuse projects.

H.R. 5376 will now move onto the Senate, where additional changes could be made to the bill. Democratic Senate leaders aim to have the chamber vote on the measure before the end of December.

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