

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 17, 2016

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Chairman
Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior,
Environment and Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Udall
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior,
Environment and Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Murkowski and Ranking Member Udall:

As your subcommittee develops spending priorities for Fiscal Year 2017 (FY17), we strongly urge you to provide robust funding for the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA). We believe that the severe disrepair of our nation's water infrastructure merits an urgent investment to secure safe, clean drinking water for our communities, and to protect the public health of our nation. We urge you to fund WIFIA at \$70 million in FY17.

In its 2013 report card, the American Society of Civil Engineers gave our nation's wastewater and drinking water infrastructure a grade of "D". We have neglected investments in our water infrastructure to such an extent that the American Water Works Association estimates for the aggregate investment needs for drinking water infrastructure would total more than \$1.7 trillion by 2050.

More than ever, it is evident that our reliance on antiquated water infrastructure can and will jeopardize public health. The crisis in Flint, Michigan shows the potential consequences of systematic underinvestment in our nation's infrastructure. While Flint is an emergency situation that deserves immediate attention and resources, it is one of many cities across the nation still dependent on lead pipes and century-old water systems.

However, despite the clear need, current funding still only provides a fraction of the necessary upgrades and maintenance for our water infrastructure. For example, appropriations for clean water infrastructure have averaged less than \$2 billion a year since 2000. WIFIA would augment current funding sources through lowering the cost of infrastructure investments and increase the availability of lower-cost capital for large projects. WIFIA authorizes the Environmental Protection Agency to make low interest loans directly from the U.S. Treasury for drinking water and wastewater projects, fulfilling a critical need in water infrastructure financing.

Additionally, because WIFIA acts as a low interest loan rather than a direct grant, every dollar appropriated to WIFIA acts as a credit subsidy, and has the ability to leverage ten dollars in water infrastructure spending. By funding WIFIA at \$70 million, the Senate has the ability to facilitate \$700 million in loans to improve our nation's infrastructure, and each dollar invested helps to create jobs and protect public health and environmental quality.

Water and wastewater infrastructure is essential to public health and to the economy. With an extensive backlog of water infrastructure investment, it is time to leverage federal funds to make a lasting impact on our communities and on our public health. We look forward to working with you to improve our nation's water infrastructure. Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Barbara Boxer
United States Senator



Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator



Kirsten E. Gillibrand
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



Robert P. Casey Jr.
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Tammy Baldwin
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Brian Schatz
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Bernard Sanders
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Robert Menendez
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