

**American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees ♦
American Rivers ♦ Association of Metropolitan Sewerage Agencies ♦
Association of State and Interstate Water Pollution Control Administrators ♦
Coalition for Alternative Wastewater Treatment ♦ Council of Infrastructure
Financing Authorities ♦ Natural Resources Defense Council ♦
National Utility Contractors Association ♦ Water and Wastewater Equipment
Manufacturers Association ♦ Water Environment Federation**

March 8, 2005

Chairman Jim Nussle
Budget Committee
309 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Ranking Member John Spratt
Budget Committee
1401 House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Support a Minimum of \$2.5 billion for Clean & Safe Drinking Water Funding

Dear Chairman Nussle and Rep. Spratt:

The diverse organizations above represent municipal authorities, operators of water and wastewater facilities, state water regulators and financial officers, labor organizations, contractors, manufacturers, and environmental groups dedicated to improving America's water and wastewater infrastructure. We write on behalf of our millions of members who urge you to protect human health and the environment and create jobs by increasing the budget authority for the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Fund programs to at least \$2.5 billion in FY 2006. The projects funded through these programs help local communities meet water quality standards, protect public health, repair and replace old and decaying pipelines and treatment plants, and ensure continued progress in restoring the health and safety of America's water bodies.

Authorizing at least \$1.5 billion for clean water funding and \$1 billion for safe drinking water next year would provide a badly-needed down payment to improve America's water and wastewater infrastructure. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that nearly \$20 billion is needed annually to protect our clean water; this is far more than \$3.4 billion that the administration has targeted as the annual federal investment in clean water funding.

Providing \$2.5 billion in budget authority for clean and safe drinking water, the budget resolution would create nearly 117,500 American jobs. This would aid the national economic recovery by keeping good paying jobs in local communities. Moreover, it is estimated that there are billions of dollars of projects ready to move forward in less than 90 days if funding is available. This would create considerable jobs in the near future.

When the Clean Water Act was passed more than 30 years ago, the federal government made a commitment to the American people to clean up the nation's waters. Since that time the federal government's funding to maintain clean water infrastructure in America has decreased by 70%; today the federal government funds a mere 5% of national infrastructure costs. In 1996, the Safe Drinking Water Act expanded the federal government's role in assuring clean water for every citizen. Much has been accomplished but there is much left to be done. States, localities, and private sources addressing these problems cannot do it alone.

We support this reasonable increase to protect clean and safe water next year because it takes a step toward a longer-term solution for our nation's water needs. We again urge you to support at least a \$2.5 billion allocation for the Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Loan Funds programs in the final Budget Resolution, and we thank you for your consideration.

Thank You,

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