

# WORD FROM WASHINGTON



## Invest Some Green, Keep Our Water Clean

(NAPSA)—Prompt action by the nation's congressional representatives could help protect our water and our wallets.

Under our schools, homes, roads, sidewalks, and other popular spots lies an unseen environmental and public health crisis in the making—this nation's drinking water and wastewater pipes and facilities urgently need repair and replacement.

This is the 30th anniversary year of the Clean Water Act, yet many municipalities continue to struggle alone to meet water infrastructure challenges, shouldering 90 percent of the financing costs for infrastructure repair and replacement. Over the next 20 years, according to the Water Infrastructure Network (WIN), Americans will have to invest approximately \$23 billion a year more than the tens of billions of dollars municipalities are already spending annually to replace aging and failing pipes, not including costs associated with meeting the increasing mandates of the Clean Water Act and the Safe Drinking Water Act, or rising security expenses in the post-September 11, 2001 world.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Administrator Christine Todd Whitman says, "I think water is going to be the biggest environmental issue that we face for the 21st century in both quantity and quality...in this country we look at enormous costs—anywhere from \$480 billion to \$1 trillion in infrastructure repair needs in cities and around the nation."

Fortunately, Congress has taken important first steps toward recognizing this enormous need by recently introducing two important water quality bills, which would significantly increase federal funding of clean and safe water projects. The Senate's Water Investment Act of 2002 (S.1961) and the House's Water Quality Infrastructure Act (H.R. 3930) represent an important first



step by Congress but more must be done to fully address the funding shortfall. Federal investment in water infrastructure in accordance with the WIN estimate would also stimulate enormous job growth and inject billions of dollars into the economy by ensuring income from water-based activities, including fishing, boating and coastal tourism.

Water infrastructure affects and improves all our day-to-day activities and lives. This infrastructure encompasses systems used in the process of drawing water from wells or reservoirs and making it available for public consumption, and systems used for handling and treating wastewater. It includes treatment facilities, distribution systems, source water protection, wastewater treatment plants and a number of pollution prevention systems.

WIN believes legislators should support what it calls a long-term federal-state-municipal partnership to help narrow the infrastructure funding gap while also streamlining the process for receiving such funds.

Many people are voicing their support to their legislators on behalf of increased federal involvement for clean, safe and affordable water. You, too, can write the U.S. Senate, Washington, D.C. 20510 and the House of Representatives, Washington, D.C. 20515 on this issue or call your Senators or Representatives at 202-224-3121. For more information, visit [www.win-water.org](http://www.win-water.org) or contact WIN at 202/833-2672.