

Proposed EPA FY 2020 Budget Slashes Drinking Water Protection

EPA Administrator Wheeler says drinking water protection is his top priority--above climate change--and one of EPA's stated goals is to "provide for clean and safe water." But the president's proposed budget for FY 2020 tells a different story, requesting 33% ***cuts (of over \$400 million)*** to state drinking water protection.

The largest cuts, \$300 million (26%), are to the **Safe Drinking Water Act State Revolving Loan Fund** from \$1.163 billion to \$863 million. This highly successful fund supports constructing and maintaining vital drinking water treatment infrastructure. This program has already done much to improve our nation's drinking water infrastructure, and it is still vital to continued improvements. In one recent year, it touched the lives of nearly 78 million people. In sum, this is a time to increase, not cut these funds:

- More than 27 million people are served by 3,500 community water systems that have recently violated existing health-based drinking water standards, and the standards themselves are dated and may not be adequate to protect public health. When people turn on their taps, they may get unsafe water that is discolored, smells like bleach, or makes children itch after bathing.
- Tens of thousands of homes lack access to basic sanitation and drinking water, sometimes including flushing toilets and running water, exposing people to raw sewage and drinking water contaminants.
- Many community water systems draw their water from rivers and lakes and use them as a source of drinking water, but nearly half a million square miles of those waters are listed as "impaired," which means they fail to meet one or more standards for water quality, *and the list is growing each year.*
- An overwhelming majority, 215 million of our nation's people, live within two miles of a polluted lake, river, stream, or ocean area.
- Our nation's drinking water infrastructure is aging and becoming less reliable. Leaking pipes and deteriorated storage and treatment equipment need repair. Each year our country suffers about 240,000 water main breaks, and billions of gallons of raw sewage are discharged into local surface waters from sewer overflows, compromising water quality. These problems could be reduced or prevented by upgrading and repairing our aging water infrastructure, replacing leaking distribution pipes and deteriorated storage and treatment equipment.
- EPA estimates that over the next 20 years, capital investments of \$472 billion will be needed to protect public health and to ensure compliance with the Safe Drinking Water Act. Communities will need to:
 - Improve and repair hundreds of thousands of miles of pipes and thousands of treatment plants, storage tanks and other key assets
 - Replace or refurbish aging or deteriorating pipelines
 - Construct, expand or rehabilitate infrastructure to reduce the presence of contaminants;

- Construct or rehabilitate water intake structures, wells and spring collectors and construct, rehabilitate or cover water storage reservoirs

The budget also proposes further cuts to drinking water protection such as:

- \$27 million (90%) cuts in support of basic drinking water and sanitation infrastructure improvements like flushing toilets and running water for poor, isolated Alaska Native villages and U.S. communities along the U.S.-Mexico border that disproportionately lack such services.
- \$38 million in cuts in grants to states for drinking water protection:
 - Grants to supervise public drinking water supplies would be cut by \$34 million, from \$102 million to \$68 million (33%).
 - Grants to protect underground sources of drinking water by underground injection control would be cut 33% to \$7 million from \$10.5 million.