

July 1, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Room H-305, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Room S-221, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Room H-204, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Room S-230, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Majority Leader Schumer, and Minority Leaders McCarthy and McConnell:

With the current drought already impacting over 90 million people in the U.S.¹, and with water scarcity likely to get worse because of population growth and climate change, there is an urgent need for the federal government to increase its investment in water efficiency.

- In the Western U.S., drought conditions mean thousands of farmers have lost water for their crops, developers report paying higher prices to bring water to new homes or cannot get a water permit at all, and fish are struggling to survive in shrunken rivers.
- This threat goes well beyond the West. 31 states are currently experiencing moderate to severe drought¹. 33 states have been hit by drought since 2000², including ones located in the Great Plains, Midwest, Southeast, and Mid-Atlantic regions. And scientists warn³ that most of the country is on pace to experience water shortages if we don't manage water better.

The undersigned organizations respectfully request that you include at least \$10 billion for water efficiency and conservation grants in any infrastructure legislation being developed by Congress and the Administration. Such action will help communities and local water suppliers better contend with the impacts of climate change and extend the benefits of water efficiency to disadvantaged households that have been unable to participate in traditional local programs.

Water efficiency not only helps ensure access to clean, affordable water amidst a changing climate, it also:

- Tackles the root cause of climate change. That's because water-saving strategies reduce the amount of energy used to heat, pump, and treat water, which in turn reduces emissions of heat-trapping carbon dioxide.
- Protects our rivers, bays, and aquifers by limiting water withdrawals.
- Saves consumers money. Water efficient plumbing products can save an average family hundreds of dollars each year⁴. This is especially important today with COVID leaving millions of Americans unable to pay water bills.
- Supports economic growth. Every \$1 billion directly invested in water efficiency is also estimated to⁵:
 - Increase economic output between \$2.5 and \$2.8 billion dollars
 - Grow GDP \$1.3 to \$1.5 billion dollars
 - Add between 12,000 and 26,000 jobs

Between 1995 to 2020, the U.S. population grew by 63.2 million people⁶ and yet water withdrawals for public supplies over that same period remained essentially unchanged. Water use efficiency policies and programs have been the most reliable water supply strategies, allowing millions of people to be served using the same volume of water.⁷ Much of the “low hanging fruit” for water savings have now been achieved. Continuing and extending water savings for the next 25 years is essential and will require a real investment, including a specific focus on disadvantaged households that have been hard to reach with water conservation programs to date.

However, the cost of ensuring reliable water supplies falls primarily to local water agencies that can be cash-strapped in the best of times, not to mention now with the pandemic leaving many customers unable to pay their bills. The federal government pays less than five percent of the cost for drinking water and waste water, according to the [National Association of Clean Water Agencies](#)⁸, relying instead on loans to local communities.

The federal government has made significant investments in energy efficiency (EE) and renewable energy (RE) over the years, which has helped our nation respond to energy crises, cut emissions, and save billions of dollars. Unfortunately, parallel investments have not been made in water efficiency and water reuse despite the increasingly urgent need to conserve water. Between 2000 and 2020, federal EERE investments dwarfed federal investments in water efficiency and water reuse by a ratio of approximately 80 to 1⁹.

As the contours of a bipartisan infrastructure bill come into focus, the undersigned organizations respectfully recommend that you include at least \$10 billion for water efficiency and conservation grants to be funded through new grants created under the Water/Wastewater, Resilience, and/or Western Water titles of this or subsequent infrastructure legislation being developed by Congress and the Administration. Such legislation can also fund additional water efficiency grants through existing programs such as the Green Project Reserve of the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund and Water Smart grants administered by the Bureau of Reclamation.

These grants will enable the replacement of water-inefficient household products, implement leak detection and repair in households, support landscape transformation projects to reduce outdoor water use, install smart agriculture irrigation systems, assist water agencies with water loss control, and implement water conservation strategies for commercial and industrial water users. With this action, the federal government will help communities and local water providers invest in the most immediate, cost-effective, equitable, and environmentally beneficial ways to address the nation’s water crisis.

The climate is changing, droughts are getting worse, and water supplies are increasingly at risk. As Congress works on the nation’s infrastructure needs, we urge you to meet these challenges by supporting an ambitious and overdue federal investment in water efficiency and water conservation.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Water Efficiency
American Rivers
Aquos Pools
Arizona Municipal Water Users Association
Big Bear Lake (CA) Dept. of Water
California State Water Resources Control Board

California Water Service
Central Basin (CA) Municipal Water District
City of Avondale, AZ
City of Bend, OR
City of Chicago (IL) Water Department
City of Durham, NC
City of Flagstaff, AZ
City of Mesa, AZ
City of Roseville, CA
City of Sacramento, CA
City of Westminster, CO
Connecticut Water
DC Water (Washington, DC)
Dickinson Associates
EcoSystems, LLC
Flume
International Association of Plumbing & Mechanical Officials
International Code Council
Irrigreen
Kohler
Marin Water (CA)
Metropolitan Water District of Southern California
Monte Vista Water District (CA)
Municipal Water District of Orange County (CA)
Natural Resources Defense Council
Nipomo (CA) Community Services District
Northwest Water & Energy Education Institute
Plumbing Manufacturers International
Purlin, LLC
Rogue Water, LLC
San Antonio Water System (TX)
Santa Clarita Valley Water Agency (CA)
Santa Margarita Water District (CA)
Scottsdale (AZ) Water
South Tahoe Public Utility District
Southern Nevada Water Authority
T&S Brass and Bronze Works, Inc.
UC Davis – Center for Water-Energy Efficiency
U.S. Green Building Council
Water Demand Management, LLC

¹ <https://www.drought.gov/current-conditions>

² <https://www.drought.gov/news/how-drought-prone-your-state-look-top-states-and-counties-drought-over-last-two-decades>

³ <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/article/partner-content-americas-looming-water-crisis>

⁴ <https://www.epa.gov/watersense/statistics-and-facts>

⁵ Mitchell, D. et. al. 2017. Transforming Water: Water Efficiency as Infrastructure Investment. Alliance for Water Efficiency. Chicago, IL

⁶ United States' resident population 1980-2020, Published by Statista Research Department, Jan 20, 2021;

<https://www.statista.com/statistics/183457/united-states--resident-population/>

⁷ <https://www.usgs.gov/mission-areas/water-resources/science/public-supply-water-use>, <https://www.waterrf.org/research/projects/residential-end-uses-water-version-2>, <https://index.flumewater.com/>

⁸ <https://www.affordable2o.org/#about-the-campaign>

⁹ <https://www.allianceforwaterefficiency.org/resources/analysis-federal-funding-2000-2020>