



Press Advisory

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NACWA, WIN Urge Senate to Introduce, Pass Clean Water Funding Legislation

The National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA) and the Water Infrastructure (WIN) called for a federal recommitment to clean water and the ideals that led Congress to enact the original Clean Water Act 35 years ago. Such a commitment should involve a viable, long-term, dedicated source of revenue in the form of a trust fund, NACWA president Christopher M. Westhoff, an assistant city attorney and public works general counsel for the City of Los Angeles, said in testimony Sept. 19 before the Senate Environment and Public Works Subcommittee on Transportation Safety, Infrastructure Security, and Water Quality.

“EPA has stated that if the infrastructure funding gap is not addressed soon, the water quality gains we have seen over the past 35 years could be erased by 2016,” Westhoff said.

In the short term, Westhoff, who testified on behalf of NACWA and WIN, urged the Senate to introduce and pass legislation that mirrors the Water Quality Financing Act of 2007 (H.R. 720) that passed the House this past March in a decisive 303-108 vote.

NACWA and WIN believe a significant federal infusion of funding is needed to bridge the water and wastewater funding gap estimated at \$300-\$500 billion over the next 20 years. Without a federal recommitment, this funding crisis --- and it is a crisis --- will fall to communities and ratepayers, who are already shouldering more than 95 percent of the cost of clean water.

“During deliberations of the original Clean Water Act, Congress decided that water infrastructure was national good that demanded federal investment,” Westhoff said. “Federal assistance simply has not kept pace with needs, declining more than 70 percent since 1980.”

In the formative years of the Clean Water Act, the federal government invested more than \$72 billion to help cities build wastewater treatment plants that significantly contributed to the clean water progress over the past 35 years. However, that assistance has plummeted 70 percent since 1980.

“Local communities are on their own to address the ever-increasing challenges of aging infrastructure, population growth, demands for better service, and more expensive federal regulations,” Westhoff said. “Clean and safe water is no less a national priority than a safe and efficient system of highways and airports, both of which enjoy sustainable, long-term sources of federal investment,”