

# CHARTING THE NEXT 50 YEARS OF CLEAN WATER LEADERSHIP AND MEMBER SUCCESS

## **A Message from NACWA's President**

Our nation has been through unprecedented upheavals in recent months. In my capacity as incoming President of NACWA and Director of KC Water, I believe that in spite of the challenges caused by a deadly pandemic and the racial divides that continue to plague our nation, we have grown and will continue to grow stronger together.

During this time, NACWA is playing — and will continue to play — an even more vibrant role in connecting us to share best practices and shape a policy landscape that grows more complex each and every day. We will do so by catering to our members' strengths of public service and an unmatched commitment to our diverse communities and our water workforce. As a utility leader, I know that the water workforce is made up of heroes. It is very important to celebrate these “H2O Heroes” and to ensure the policy landscape prioritizes our needs as an essential services sector.

I would like to thank NACWA's outgoing President, John Sullivan, Chief Engineer of the Boston Water & Sewer Commission, the NACWA Board of Directors, and our NACWA staff for their amazing leadership during this very challenging time. If you look at the actions that have been taken and the progress that has been made in recent months I think you will agree that it is truly remarkable.

NACWA has:

- Reversed its previous decision to raise dues 3.5% and will maintain membership dues at their current rate, in response to the revenue pressures NACWA's public utility and private sector affiliates are facing;
- Canceled or rescheduled all of its in-person conferences – including Water Week with over 30 partnering organizations and a much-anticipated 50th Anniversary Conference and Gala scheduled for July in Seattle — and swiftly replaced them all with high-value webinars and virtual events that have been made accessible to all members and non-member public agencies free of charge throughout this fiscal year as a benefit to the members and the water sector as a whole;





- Ensured that the water and wastewater workforce is now deemed “essential” by key federal and state decision-making bodies;
- Shared amongst all member utilities’ pandemic continuity of operations plans (COOPs) that are keeping the water workforce and the communities we serve safe;
- Advanced stimulus legislation provisions for federal grant funds for utilities that are continuing to serve low-income households despite the inability to pay their water/sewer bills and advancing affordability reform with EPA;
- Gathered vital information on the billions of dollars of revenue loss to utilities resulting from the pandemic and the related business shutdown/unemployment crisis to maximize opportunities for federal funding eligibility for water/wastewater utilities;

- Provided a forum for wastewater utility leaders to discuss the opportunities for the surveillance of COVID-19 in wastewater to provide an early warning system for the next potential pandemic hotspots;
- Raised the “Toilets Are Not Trashcans” initiative to federal priority status as the use of wipes and other non-flushable products are even more routinely used and unfortunately flushed down the toilet; and
- Positioned the water sector to receive a significant portion of any future jobs/stimulus/infrastructure-based federal funding.

The ability of NACWA to respond swiftly to changing national circumstances is, in my view, its greatest strength. We have influence, however, only to the extent that all utilities — large, medium and small — weigh in, through NACWA.

It is my commitment to the members that we will build on what has made NACWA successful to date — aggressive and influential advocacy coupled with the sharing among an unparalleled utility leaders network capable of lifting us to a new level of public service and environmental sustainability.

I look forward to seeing everyone soon at a NACWA conference and to the resumption of something resembling “normal”. Please accept my sincere thanks for all you do. Know that my commitment will be to ensure that NACWA continues to be a relentless advocate and unparalleled peer-to-peer resource for you and the clean water sector.

TERRY LEEDS | NACWA PRESIDENT  
Director, KC Water | Kansas City, MO