

## Water Groups Push Senate to Renew Biden Infrastructure Funding



**Bobby Magill**

Reporter

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Clean water and wastewater utility groups on Wednesday urged a Senate committee to reauthorize federal funding to upgrade water infrastructure nationwide.

The 2021 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act dedicated \$50 billion for water works upgrades, including lead pipe replacements and other improvements. The funding, distributed by states mainly through the Environmental Protection Agency's drinking water and clean water state revolving funds (SRF), expires in 2026.

Funding in the infrastructure law should be the “baseline” for reauthorization, said Kyle Dreyfuss-Wells, treasurer for National Association of Clean Water Agencies, speaking before the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee.

The SRFs provide the lowest-cost loans to local water systems, helping them accelerate clean water investment, she said.

Sen. Adam Schiff (D-Calif.) said 9 million lead service lines remain in the US, and their replacement isn’t something the Senate can minimize or defund.

“Much of the nation’s water system needs repair or replacement,” he said. “We need \$625 billion to bring it up to par.”

Committee chair Sen. Shelley Moore Capito (R-W.Va.) said it’s important for the Senate to build on the infrastructure law’s progress toward upgrading water systems in part because there are many rural communities that still don’t have access to clean water.

Renewed funding is essential to states that have huge backlogs of water infrastructure repairs, such as Michigan, said Eric Oswald, president of the Association of State Drinking Water Administrators, speaking at the hearing.

“We tend to let that infrastructure go until the point that it fails,” he said.

The infrastructure law provided down payments on reducing the infrastructure replacement backlog, Oswald said.

Grants provided under that law are especially important to rural communities that can’t afford water system upgrades without them, said Tom Goulette, representing the National Rural Water Association.

Technical assistance that supports small water systems’ ability to apply for loans and grants is essential, he said.

“Without technical assistance offered by state rural water associations, many communities will be left behind,” he said.

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