

July 23, 2021

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
United State Senate
S-221, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United State Senate
S-230, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Leader Schumer and Leader McConnell,

The National Utility Contractors Association (NUCA) represents construction contractors, manufacturers, and distributors who build and maintain a wide range of our nation's water and wastewater infrastructure. Our members see everyday first-hand that our nation's dilapidated and obsolete water, sewer, and stormwater systems require hundreds of billions of dollars in needed improvements.

Well-functioning water infrastructure is indispensable to the health of our country and economic growth. Our nation's underground water and wastewater infrastructure needs to ensure that all Americans have access to clean drinking water and safe sanitary wastewater systems, needs to provide businesses with the resources they need to keep our economy moving, and needs to protect our nation's waterways, beaches, and other natural wonders for future use.

Alarming events over the last several years in multiple U.S. states such as Michigan, Mississippi, and Texas demonstrated that only with Congress's help and increased private investment can municipalities begin to address the communities facing increasing difficulties in paying for needed infrastructure improvements.

The Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) most recent assessment found that \$473 billion will be needed to maintain and replace our aging drinking water infrastructure. If Congress does not act this session, that figure could become much higher – as contractors can attest, the cost of emergency repairs can be three-to-ten times higher than scheduled replacement. Yet as the costs of these repairs mount, federal spending has fallen in recent years to just nine percent of all spending on drinking utility infrastructure.

The \$35 billion in funding levels passed by the Senate on April 29 by a bipartisan vote of 89-2 in S. 914, the Drinking Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Act (DWWIA), is an opening investment in our nation's infrastructure that will create thousands of new jobs and help ensure millions of Americans have access to clean and healthy drinking water and safe, sanitary wastewater systems. As such, NUCA strongly urges that the Senate's \$1.2 trillion infrastructure package to include \$35 billion as the minimum level of funding specifically for the federal programs supporting water infrastructure.

NUCA fully agrees with recent statements made by Sen. Tom Carper (D-Del.) and other members of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee objecting to proposals which would not fully fund S. 914 as it currently stands in the bipartisan framework, and urges Congress to pass legislation containing at a minimum the full level of funding approved in S. 914. NUCA strongly supports large-scale investment in lead pipe removal and replacement, but urges Congress to fully fund S. 914 at the original level *in addition* to providing dedicated funding for this critical public health issue.

In addition to traditional public funding, Congress must examine other sources to address the funding shortfall facing America's drinking water infrastructure. Congress should consider measures that would open the door for more private sector investment through innovative financing such as lifting the cap on exempt facility bonds (also known as private activity bonds) for these infrastructure projects.

Leadership is required at critical times in American history to deliver to our citizens the basics of a community. Clean water is an essential need and should be considered indispensable to the economic and public health of the country. Water and wastewater infrastructure issues affect every state in our nation and the cost is growing. In the negotiations ahead, we implore you to remember your state's—and America's—water and wastewater infrastructure systems.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Best Regards,



Doug Carlson
Chief Executive Officer

CC:

Senator Tom Carper, Chair, Committee on Environment and Public Works
Senator Shelley Moore Capito, Ranking Member, Committee on Environment and Public Works
Senator Richard Burr
Senator Bill Cassidy
Senator Susan Collins
Senator Chris Coons
Senator Lindsey Graham
Senator Maggie Hassan
Senator John Hickenlooper
Senator Angus King
Senator Mark Kelly of Arizona
Senator Joe Manchin
Senator Jerry Moran
Senator Lisa Murkowski
Senator Rob Portman
Senator Mitt Romney
Senator Jacky Rosen
Senator Mike Rounds
Senator Jeanne Shaheen
Senator Kyrsten Sinema
Senator Jon Tester
Senator Thom Tillis
Senator Mark Warner
Senator Todd Young