



**American Water Works
Association**

Dedicated to the World's Most Important Resource®

Government Affairs Office
1300 Eye Street NW
Suite 701W
Washington, DC 20005-3314
T 202.628.8303
F 202.628.2846

URGENT!

AWWA Legislative Alert

To: AWWA Fly-In delegates

From: Tommy Holmes, Legislative Director

Action requested: contact your members of Congress and request that upcoming coronavirus legislation addressing the needs of the water sector

Time for action: now; members of Congress and their staffs are meeting now to discuss upcoming rounds of stimulus legislation

Background: As you have no doubt seen in the news, Congress has passed three major economic bills to deal with the coronavirus pandemic. The first dealt with immediate medical issues. The second addressed paid leave, unemployment and food assistance. The third provided loans to industry and businesses and provided payments to individuals. Funding for the third bill has already run out, so the next recovery/stimulus bill may simply provide more funding for those programs.

However, AWWA and the other major water associations have been in extensive discussions with congressional staff on addressing the needs of the water sector. Three major topic areas are under discussion:

1. Assistance to low-income water customers;
2. Assistance to water utilities because of revenue shortfalls stemming from bans on shutting off water service to delinquent customers and from business and school revenue drop-offs; and
3. Investment in water infrastructure to spur job growth.

Congressional staff wanted to see hard dollar figure for what was happening in water systems because of the pandemic. Therefore, AWWA and the Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies partnered to commission a study by the firm Raftelis to develop the figures Congress is looking for. Raftelis did an outstanding job and under a very tight timeframe. That report, funded by AWWA's Water Industry Technical Action Fund and overseen by our Water Utility Council, is attached.

Congress still needs to hear from constituents that there are economic needs in the water sector. Members also need to hear how water utilities are meeting the challenges of dealing with this pandemic in staffing and operations.

We are asking AWWA members to contact their own members of Congress to ask Congress to address those three issues listed above. At this stage, we do not need to get into specific dollar amounts; we just need Congress to address these water issues.

A letter template is below. Feel free to use it as a basis for your own letters to Congress. Our report describing the significant economic impacts on water utilities and their customers is attached. We encourage you to send that along as well.

And please send me a copy of your letters and any responses you get from Congress. That helps when we have individual conversations with congressional offices.

Contact information for members of the House may be found at www.house.gov and for members of the Senate at www.senate.gov.

If you have questions, you may contact me at tholmes@awwa.org or Nate Norris at norris@awwa.org.

April 17, 2020

The Honorable XXX XXXXXXXX
United States Senate [or U.S. House of Representatives]
Washington, DC

Dear Senator [or Representative] XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX,

We want to thank Congress for the steps taken so far to address many of the challenges the coronavirus pandemic presents to this country. As Congress continues its work to confront the pandemic and its effects, we strongly urge you to address the pandemic's effects on the water community of America.

More specifically, we urge that future recovery or stimulus bills address these issues:

1. Assistance to low-income customers who have had trouble paying their water bills and are now facing greater hardship due to the economic downturn.
2. Assistance to water utilities facing significant revenue shortfalls they are no longer shutting off delinquent customers and because revenues from business and schools has fallen.
3. Investment in the nation's water infrastructure to spur economic growth, create jobs and protect human and environmental health.

Protection of our water and wastewater systems is particularly crucial now because of the need for people to wash their hands and bathe to hinder spread of the virus. We need sound wastewater systems to further protect the health of our citizens and to protect the environment.

As you can see from the attached report, revenue shortfalls at U.S. drinking water utilities from the coronavirus pandemic *may reduce economic activity by \$32.7 billion and cost 75,000 to 90,000 private sector jobs.*

At my utility, we have seen revenues drop off [insert information about your local utility and how the coronavirus has affected it]

Operations at a water utility require some personnel to be on site. [describe how your are adjusting staffing levels, placement of personnel, and your needs for personal protective equipment and its availability and costs]

I am proud of the dedication and selflessness displayed by our staff in keeping safe water flowing into our customers homes. We urge Congress to help us keep that level of service going.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have questions about our water system.

Sincerely,