Our Mission
Protecting Our Legacy
Building Our Future

31st Constitutional Convention, Las Vegas, NV

Clean and Safe Water

WHEREAS, Almost a decade ago, The United Nations declared that water and sanitation are human rights; and

WHEREAS, Every American has a right to clean, safe water. The 2015 water crisis in Flint, MI brought the issue of water safety to the forefront and exposed failings at every level of government. This isn't just a problem in Flint. High levels of lead plague schools, the industrial chemical polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB) permeates water supplies around the country, and other industrial pollution continues to seep into our lakes, rivers, and streams; and

WHEREAS, While elected officials say they are interested in fixing America's aging water infrastructure, appropriate resources have not been allocated to revamp a system with countless miles of aging lead pipes, an estimated 240,000 water main breaks a year and leaking pipes that waste two trillion gallons of treated water. Additionally, many of our water treatment plants are dated and need to be modernized; and

WHEREAS, the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE), in their 2017 Infrastructure Report Card, gave our systems a "D" grade. The American Water Works Association estimates drinking water systems require $1.7 trillion in infrastructure investment over the next 40 years. The Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) needs survey estimates the United States requires $271 billion for wastewater and storm water improvements over the next 20 years; and

WHEREAS, The EPA is responsible for ensuring the safety of the nation's drinking water in public water supplies, and UWUA advocacy with the agency should focus on a return to its core mission of fighting for public safety; and

WHEREAS, Highly trained workers are critical to safe and efficient drinking and waste water systems. The Water Research Foundation projects that in the next 10 years, roughly one-third of all current water and wastewater utility workers will retire; and

WHEREAS, Like the electrical grid, water systems are increasingly technological, which also make them more vulnerable to cyber as well as physical attacks. Encompassing tens of thousands of local water systems, cyber security for water treatment and supply networks is only loosely monitored at the federal level and is often ignored by state utility commissions. Sixty-three cyber vulnerabilities were uncovered in the water supply sector in 2018, according to federal data.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, The UWUA calls on federal legislators to fully fund infrastructure and standards enforcement efforts aimed at keeping community drinking water safe and healthy; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, The UWUA calls on local, state and federal policy makers to properly invest in our vital water and waste systems infrastructure. Clean water is a bipartisan issue and is a critical public health issue that demands adequate funding, both public and private; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, UWUA commends Congress and the president for passing the "America's Water Infrastructure Act of 2018." Under the law, any water utility serving 3,300 or more people is now expected to carry out a "risk and resilience" assessment of its networks, including a review of cyber defenses, a key component in ensuring public water systems are safe.

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, UWUA water workers see the problems with our drinking and wastewater systems every day and are part of the solution. Through the work of the UWUA safety committees and the Power for America Training Trust (P4A), we are building a culture of safety that protects workers and water customers. Most recently, the California Water Utility Council and California Water Service Group joined P4A. UWUA local unions representing the water sector are encouraged to speak to employers about joining P4A to participate in the top-notch, peer-led safety, skills and leadership training.