



Clean and Safe Water

WHEREAS, Over 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, Michigan brought the issue of water safety to the forefront and exposed failings at every level of government. The water crisis in Jackson, Mississippi in 2022 exposed the dire ramifications of the failure to maintain water infrastructure. But this isn't just a problem in Flint or Jackson. High levels of lead plague schools, the industrial chemical polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB) permeates water supplies around the country, and other industrial pollution, such as so called forever chemicals like perfluoroalkyl and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), continue to seep into our lakes, rivers, and streams which may cause a myriad of health concerns for people and wildlife; and

WHEREAS, the 2021 Infrastructure Act made \$50 billion available to EPA to strengthen the nation's drinking and wastewater systems and the 2022 Inflation Reduction Act included an additional \$10 billion, a generation of on-the-ground work must be carried out in order to revamp the water system. Countless miles of aging lead pipes are still in place, an estimated 240,000 water main breaks occur each year, leaking pipes waste six billion gallons of treated water each day, and many of our water treatment plants are dated and still need to be modernized; and

WHEREAS, the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE), in their 2021 Infrastructure Report Card, gave our systems a "C-". The Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) 7th drinking water infrastructure needs survey estimates the United States requires \$625 billion for water infrastructure needs over the next 20 years; and

WHEREAS, Highly trained workers are critical to safe and efficient drinking and waste water systems. The EPA projects that in the next 10 years, roughly one-third of all current water sector 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 often only loosely monitored. In 2023, the EPA set forth requirements for state governments to audit the cybersecurity practices of public water systems, as both the FBI and US Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency have issued multiple warnings of ransomware attacks on water systems.

THEREFORE, BE IT 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. The UWUA supports HR 250, the Clean Water SRF Parity Act, a bill which would make State Revolving Fund money available to private wastewater projects, just as it currently is for private drinking water projects; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, The UWUA urges state regulatory bodies to require water utilities to report cyber events to state environmental officials and to direct regulated utilities to include cyber security in risk management plans; and

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 P4A Training Trust, we are building a culture of safety that protects workers and water customers. Currently, the California Water Utility Council and California Water Service Group are part of the 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.