

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 23, 2008

The Honorable Robert C. Byrd
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
Chairman
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Wayne Allard
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Byrd, Ranking Member Cochran, Chairman Feinstein, and Ranking Member Allard:

With our nation in a recession and the economy stagnant, it is clear that an immediate economic stimulus is needed to create jobs and promote economic growth. As Congress works to address the tremendous uncertainties facing the American people, we look forward to working with you to quickly implement an economic recovery plan.

It is our view that economic stimulus legislation should devote substantial resources to revitalizing our nation's aging infrastructure. Studies indicate that for every \$1 billion invested in infrastructure projects, anywhere from 35,000 to nearly 50,000 jobs are created. But the return on infrastructure investment is not limited to job creation; it is a means of restoring confidence in the economy, creating opportunities for American businesses, and rebuilding public assets critical to the health, safety, and prosperity of the American people.

All of these returns can be realized by investing in drinking and wastewater infrastructure programs and we urge you to provide significant funding for these programs in the stimulus package. No infrastructure priority is more foundational to public health and safety or more basic to a community's ability to attract new businesses and residents. Our national economic potential derives from community-level economic growth, and such growth will not occur if we do not address basic water and sewer infrastructure needs.

Recent EPA reports on the state of our nation's public drinking and wastewater utilities predict an estimated need of nearly \$500 billion over the next twenty years to keep up with the demands of aging infrastructure. It is crucial that communities in all fifty states have continued access to the financing needed to make these projects a reality.

A serious concern of numerous communities across the country is combined sewage overflows (CSO). Municipalities must balance the demands of repairing existing infrastructure and taking

the costly, but necessary, steps to reduce the pollution in our waterways that results from CSOs. An estimated \$50 billion is required to address CSOs on a nationwide basis. It is tremendously challenging for communities to finance CSO projects under the best of circumstances; in a recession compounded by tight credit markets and foreclosure-driven drops in local property taxes, it is virtually impossible.

There are shovel-ready water infrastructure projects across the nation, and it is time to invest in them. We strongly recommend that the economic stimulus bill include the following:

- \$10 billion for EPA's Clean Water State Revolving Fund (SRF)
- \$10 billion for EPA's Drinking Water SRF
- \$5 billion in grants to address combined sewage overflows to be distributed to the states on the basis of EPA estimated need. A grant program would help reduce the burden on ratepayers and shore up the financial situation for communities faced with budgetary shortfalls
- \$2 billion for USDA's Rural Development water and environmental programs
- \$300 million for water infrastructure improvements to be administered by EDA's Public Works and Economic Development Program

We ask for your support for these necessary programs and look forward to working with you to ensure access to clean water for all Americans.

Sincerely,



Senator Sherrod Brown



Senator Debbie Stabenow



Senator Robert P. Casey, Jr.



Senator Claire McCaskill