

September 6th, 2016

The Honorable John Cornyn
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Cornyn,

On behalf of the undersigned state legislators, business leaders and conservation and civic organizations, we strongly urge you to support investment in the nation's drinking and clean water infrastructure as part of the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2016.

As you know, S.2848 – the Senate version of the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2016 – authorizes more than \$4.8 billion for programs under the Safe Drinking Water Act and Clean Water Act, including a \$220 million aid package to address the Flint, Michigan crisis.

Unfortunately, water quality problems are not unique to Flint. Many of Texas' drinking-water and clean-wastewater systems are falling into a state of disrepair. Each year, billions of gallons of water are lost in Texas when aging water pipes break, costing millions of dollars in repairs and economic losses. According to data from the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, outdated water systems dumped at least 76 million gallons of raw sewage into our rivers, lakes, and streams in 671 separate incidents in 2015.

Our drinking water infrastructure also too often poses health risks to Texas families. According to a June 2016 report by the Natural Resources Defense Council, 6.6 million Texans were served by water systems with lead violations in 2015. And the Environmental Integrity Project found that drinking water systems that serve more than 51,000 people across 34 Texas communities had exceeded Safe Drinking Water standards for arsenic, a dangerous cancer-causing chemical.

These all-too-commonplace incidents endanger both the environment and public health, while also undermining economic growth.

Texas needs a major investment to help modernize our water infrastructure and protect public health and safety. In 2012, the American Society of Civil Engineers assigned Texas a grade of D- for drinking water infrastructure. In the "2011 Drinking Water Infrastructure Needs Survey's Report to Congress," Texas reported water infrastructure needs of \$33 billion in the next twenty years - the second greatest water infrastructure need in the nation.

Responding to this demand and the historic drought, local governments and the state of Texas have developed new funding sources to address these needs. However, in order to address the magnitude of the problem and to help keep water rates affordable, we can't go it alone.

Many of these aging systems are in rural areas that do not have the population capacity to float bonds for needed repairs and to expand systems in anticipation of growth. Repairs in water delivery infrastructure are greatly needed in many rural communities in Texas to ensure conservation and keep

water rates affordable. Waste water upgrades are needed to make sure our lakes and rivers meet recreational standards. The Texas Water Development Board offers no-interest loans for infrastructure repairs but many small communities are in need of grants as they do not have the customer base needed to pay off these loans.

The Senate's WRDA 2016 authorizes a number of critical programs to help communities update and maintain their drinking water and sewage-treatment systems. The bill helps "small and disadvantaged communities that lack basic drinking water or wastewater services with \$1.4 billion in authorized funding over five years, and another grant program authorizes \$300 million over five years for the replacement of lead water lines. An additional \$1.8 billion in grants is authorized over a five-year period to address sewer overflows and stormwater discharges."¹ The bill also promotes green infrastructure and innovative technologies to address drought and water supply needs.

As Congress works to pass a WRDA bill this summer, we strongly urge you to support inclusion of these clean water investments as part of the final package approved by the House and Senate.

Sincerely,

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¹ Beason, Sarah, Martinko, Stephen, Startucci, James. "'A Lot of Ingredients' in This Year's WRDA". *K&L Gates*. K&L Gates LLP, 03 May 2016. Web. 06 July 2016.

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