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President Trump signs Water Resources Development Act *MSD and partners across the country applaud passage*

LOUISVILLE, KY – President Donald Trump today signed the biennial Water Resources Development Act (WRDA), which includes significant provisions that benefit drinking water, wastewater and stormwater infrastructure and policy. Included in WRDA is a \$1 million per year competitive Water Workforce Development Program grant, which is championed by Louisville MSD and its partner utilities in the Water Agency Leader's Alliance (WALA), the National League of Cities and the National Association of Clean Water Agencies. Utility agencies from both rural and urban communities will be eligible to apply for the grant funding, which can be used for a variety of job training and workforce development programs.

Earlier this month, Congress voted on — and passed nearly unanimously by a vote of 99-1— this legislation, which was sponsored by U.S. Senators Cory Booker (D-NJ) and Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV). The conference report for the bill, known as “America’s Water Infrastructure Act (S. 3021)” was passed unanimously by the House on September 13.

Louisville Metro Mayor Greg Fischer states, “Louisville Metro and MSD are committed to continuing long-standing partnerships with our local schools and workforce development agencies in preparing our future leaders for good-paying, stable jobs in the water industry. Programs like this are good for our young people, and they’re good for the economic and social development of our community.”

The influx of infrastructure work is projected to generate \$524 billion in economic activity and create nearly 300,000 job opportunities across the country. The competitive grant program will help train workers to build and repair essential water systems throughout the country while providing pathways to careers with competitive wages and benefits.

“As Louisville MSD plans for a \$4.3 billion Critical Repair & Reinvestment Plan, we recognize the need for a qualified and skilled workforce to meet our infrastructure challenges,” said Louisville MSD Executive Director Tony Parrott. “In Louisville alone, the economic impact will be \$5 billion and 3,700 jobs per year throughout the next 20

years in sustaining our Critical Repair & Reinvestment Plan. This grant will ensure that funding is available for MSD to collaborate with workforce development agencies, technical schools, and others to get employees in the diverse neighborhoods we serve the training and skills needed for our industry. Additionally, our labor need is compounded by the expect to loss of 19 percent of our workforce to retirement in the next 5 to 10 years. The time is now to prepare for this upcoming shortage of skilled workers in our industry.”

“Cities across the country are facing a severe shortage of skilled workers to operate our nation’s water systems,” said Clarence E. Anthony, CEO and Executive Director of the National League of Cities. “At the same time, there is a looming workforce challenge to build new water infrastructure systems that meet the needs of the 21st century. We are thankful to Senators Cory Booker and Shelley Moore Capito for their bipartisan leadership to help secure the inclusion of this important workforce development and training program in the final water resources bill, ‘America’s Water Infrastructure Act.’ Investments such as these equip cities with the tools to develop the next generation of workers and provide clean and safe water to American communities, which is essential to driving our nation’s economy forward.”

“At the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC), nearly 50 percent of our employees are eligible to retire in the next 5 to 10 years,” said SFPUC General Manager Harlan L. Kelly, Jr. “We must act now to ensure that we are prepared to replenish our workforce ranks and that we do so with employees who reflect the diversity of our communities. I want to thank Senators Capito and Booker for their leadership on tackling this critical issue, and to our own Senator Harris for her support for this important legislation.”

With climate change increasing the likelihood of extreme and volatile weather events, building and maintaining the nation’s critical water infrastructure is more important than ever. Over the next decade, the country’s 30 largest water utilities are estimated to spend \$23 billion on water infrastructure projects, according to the Water Environment Research Foundation.

“We strongly supported this legislation and its inclusion in the 2018 WRDA package,” said Adam Krantz, Chief Executive Officer of the National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA). “Clean water agencies provide quality jobs in every State which are vital to protecting local water quality and public health. Developing the next generation of skilled workers is a significant challenge that utilities are facing head-on. This new grant program will help address the challenge while facilitating the development of new approaches and best practices for addressing the water workforce pipeline. Senator Capito and Senator Booker have been leaders on this issue, and we thank them for their efforts.”

More than 30 percent of the nation’s water and wastewater workers are eligible to retire in the next 5 to 10 years, making this grant program a vital opportunity to train the next generation of industry employees.

For every \$1 million invested in water infrastructure improvements, there is a direct, indirect and induced impact of 15.5 jobs,” said Commissioner Kishia L. Powell, City of Atlanta Department of Watershed Management. “That is why we are pleased that Congress unanimously passed bipartisan legislation to assist municipalities in improving local water infrastructure, creating well-paying jobs and securing the future of our most valuable resource. The provision outlined in the 2018 Water Resources Development Act for a water workforce development grant will provide the necessary funding to continue our innovative workforce development programs that support the department’s strong resolve to ensure water remains safe and accessible to residents of Atlanta by investing in training Atlantans to join our workforce.”

Many of the careers in the water and wastewater industries have low-educational barriers to entry, and the openings are often permanent, civil service positions. When paired with strong community partnerships and intentional strategies to address barriers to employment for hard-to-serve communities, these training programs can help reduce income inequality and address the shrinking middle class.

“The Camden County Municipal Utilities Authority is very grateful to our own Senator, Cory Booker of New Jersey, and to Senator Shelley Moore Capito of West Virginia, for sponsoring the water workforce bill,” said Andrew Kricun, Executive Director and Chief Engineer of the Camden County Municipal Utilities Authority. “This will make such a huge impact in our water industry and the communities we serve both rural and urban communities. Water utilities need replacement workers, and we are often located in communities where people need jobs. The new water workforce bill will help provide the resources so that our neighbors who need jobs can get the necessary training to become the replacement workers that water utilities need. It is a true win-win for everyone.”

The partner agencies in WALA advised on a recent [study from the Brooking Institution](#) that found workers in the water industry tended to be older and lacked racial and gender diversity in certain areas. The report recommended new strategies at the local, regional, state and national level to attract younger and more diverse employees. The competitive grant program—the first of its kind for the water industry—can help achieve those goals.



LouisvilleMSD

About MSD

The Louisville/Jefferson County Metropolitan Sewer District (MSD) works to achieve and maintain clean, environmentally safe waterways for a healthy and vibrant community. The organization’s more than 630 employees provide wastewater management, drainage and flood protection services across the 376 square miles of Louisville Metro. In addition to operating and maintaining Louisville Metro’s sewer system, floodwall system, water quality treatment centers and flood pumping stations, MSD invests in water quality projects each year, plants more than 1,000 trees and other vegetation annually to enhance water filtration and reduce runoff, and provides numerous outreach programs to inform and educate the community about protecting our waterways.