Mayors Water Council

Fall 2025 Edition

INSIDE -

A Farewell from the Chair

Danene Sorace, Mayor of Lancaster

As mayor, I have learned that balancing water quality with affordability is one of the most difficult challenges we face. We want both. Yet the aggressive timelines and limits tied to federal mandates often make that balance feel out of reach. That is why it is so important that the Water Council and the U.S. Conference of Mayors are advocating for changes to the Financial Capability Assessment (FCA) so that it more accurately reflects true community affordability. Currently, the FCA relies on area median income as its benchmark, which masks the financial strain on residents whose incomes fall well below the median.

Centering affordability creates a more practical and equitable way to evaluate and prioritize water quality investments. We know that PFAS contamination must be addressed, but only 20% of PFAS exposure comes from drinking water. We know lead service lines must be replaced, but allowing longer compliance schedules in communities with effective corrosion control is both reasonable and protective. We know municipal water systems face immense capital demands, and no community should be forced into regulatory decisions that put water production and distribution at risk. Ensuring reliable access to safe water must always be the first priority.

As I near the end of my term as mayor, I encourage the Water Council to keep affordability at the center of its work. Affordability provides the framework for making sound infrastructure investments, weighing costs against the benefits of risk reduction, and advancing consolidation among the 50,000 community water systems nationwide. By leading with affordability, we can advance water policy that is sustainable for every community.

New Water Council Leadership Appointed

Appointed in July 2025 by USCM President Mayor David Holt, please join us in welcoming Mayors **John Marchand** *of Livermore, CA* (left) and **Mark Myers of** *Greenwood, IN* (right) as the new **Co-Chairs for the Mayors Water Council**. They will join Co-Chair Mayor Danene Sorace in addressing the nation's most pressing water issues.

Mayor Marchand brings extensive expertise in water management. Prior to his role in city government, he served as a water quality chemist for the Alameda County Water District and on the Zone 7 Water Board (Tri-Valley) from 1990-2005. He is also a Life Member of the American Water Works Association.

Mayor Myers brings a strong background in public safety and community service. In addition to his mayoral duties, he is vice Chair of the Johnson County Recycling District, serves on the board of the Indiana Law Enforcement Academy, and is President of the Accelerate Indiana Municipalities organization. His former experience includes 14 years as a sheriff as well as work with the Greenwood Fire Department.

JOIN US: Fall Mayors Water Council Meeting

Hosted by our new Co-Chair Mayor John Marchand, the Mayors Water Council will convene in **Livermore, CA**, on **October 23–24, 2025**. **Admission is free** for all mayors and their staff. Municipal water and public works staff are strongly encouraged to attend.

Key topics of discussion will include western water supplies, cyber and disaster security, federal financial assistance, PFAS, and more.

Registration and agenda details for the meeting can be found here.

Mayors Convene in Tampa

Pictured: Mayor Samson Borgelin, City of North Lauderdale

The Mayors Water Council convened in Tampa, FL on June 19, 2025 during The United States Conference of Mayors' 93rd Annual Meeting. Led by Co-Chair Danene Sorace of Lancaster, PA, a host of Mayors, business leaders, and subject matter experts gathered to discuss the nation's most pressing water issues.

Highlights included:

A presentation from **Michael Chirico** from American Water on capital improvement plans followed by an update on recent executive order and judicial actions impacting the water sector from **Susan Bodine (***Earth & Water Law)*. USCM staff then provided a briefing of the budget Reconciliation efforts, upcoming FY-2026 appropriations, and the status of on-going litigations for EPA's PFAS and lead and copper rules. **Ashanti Hamilton** from Veolia North America updated us on Water Workforce Development.

A Lead Pipe resolution, as well as a Financial Capability Assessment resolution were both passed by the Conference's Environment Committee during the Annual Meeting. You can find all presentations, as well as the new resolutions, here.

Pictured: Mayor LaToya Cantrell, City of New Orleans

Pictured: Mayor Angela Birney, City of Redmond

Mayor's Spotlight

Mayor Deborah Whitfield
Lawrence, Indiana

The City of Lawrence, Indiana, is proud to be a community that values both innovation and stewardship in its approach to water infrastructure. With a growing population nearing 50,000 residents, our city is served by a robust public utility system that includes three water treatment facilities, four water storage tanks, nine production wells, plans to install two new production wells, 24 sewer-pumping stations, and hundreds of miles of water and sewer mains. Our team maintains more than 2,000 fire hydrants, 4,000 valves, and 4,000 manholes—critical assets that support safety, public health, and sustainable growth.

Lawrence draws its water from deep wells, treating it to remove iron and manganese while adding chlorine for disinfection, fluoride for dental health, and phosphates to control corrosion. Our crew flushes the water distribution system each spring and fall to maintain water quality. These routine practices form the backbone of a well-run utility—but just a decade ago, Lawrence's water utility was on the brink of financial collapse.

In May 2017, the Common Council took a bold step by approving a long-overdue rate adjustment recommended by the Utility Service Board and supported by the administration. That decision restored financial stability and launched a wave of critical infrastructure investment. Our city has modernized its water treatment plants, replaced aging water mains, improved its bond rating, and secured major state funding to support long-term sustainability.

When I joined the Council in 2020, I continued to support sound and forward-thinking policies. In 2022, I voted alongside my colleagues to approve the first sewer rate increase since 2009. This critical move, informed by a professional rate study, addressed rising treatment costs, operational needs, and compliance with a U.S. EPA mandate to eliminate sanitary sewer overflows. The new rates support a $20 million bond for sanitary sewer capital improvements, which will reduce emergency repairs and treatment costs, creating a more efficient and sustainable future.

As mayor, I'm committed to maintaining this momentum. That means continued investment in infrastructure, thoughtful planning for future growth, and a transparent, customer-focused approach. Instead of waiting a decade or more for major adjustments, we now conduct rate studies every five years to ensure fair, sustainable rates that can support our city. The Mayors Water Council provides an important space to share strategies and advocate for local needs on a national stage. Whether addressing climate resilience, affordability, or aging infrastructure, we are stronger when we lead—and learn—together.

Mayor's Spotlight

Mayor Mark Freeman
Mesa, Arizona

Mesa, Arizona, home to over 500,000 residents in the heart of the Sonoran Desert, continues to set the standard for responsible water stewardship in the Southwest. In this dry environment, every drop is vital, especially since about half of Mesa's water supply comes from the Colorado River, making long-term water sustainability a top priority. The City employs innovative management policies, advanced infrastructure, and strategic partnerships to ensure water security.

Mesa leads in large-scale demand management. In 2019, City Council approved the Large Customer Sustainable Water Ordinance, establishing a permitting framework and demand ceiling for high-volume users. Those exceeding the ceiling must offset consumption by securing non-Mesa water resources through Long-Term Storage Credits. This policy supports Mesa's broader framework, including the comprehensive Water Master Plan and 100-year Assured Water Supply Designation from the Arizona Department of Water Resources.

A major project underway is the Central Mesa Reuse Pipeline. At over $200 million, this 10.5-mile pipeline, expected to be completed this year, will deliver reclaimed water from Mesa's Northwest Water Reclamation Plant to the Gila River Indian Community for agriculture. In return, Mesa will receive an additional 8,000 acre-feet of Colorado River water annually.

Through strategic planning, partnerships, and investments, Mesa safeguards its water future. This forward-thinking approach ensures long-term supply, strengthens drought resilience, and serves as a national model for collaboration on critical water issues.

For more information, visit mesaaz.gov/water.

Mayor's Spotlight

Mayor Jose "Pepe" Diaz
Sweetwater, Florida

Under the leadership of Mayor José "Pepe" Diaz, the City of Sweetwater, Florida has become a model for innovative and sustainable water management. With a public service career spanning over 30 years, including distinguished roles as Miami-Dade County Commissioner and Commission Chair, Mayor Díaz has consistently prioritized infrastructure resilience, flood prevention, and environmental stewardship.

Appointed by Governor Jeb Bush, Diaz served for 25 years on the Federal South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force, playing a key role in shaping regional and national Everglades restoration strategies. His long-standing involvement ensured that South Florida's environmental priorities remained front and center in federal water management policy and funding discussions.

Throughout his county tenure, Díaz championed transformative projects, including $1.6 billion dollars in wastewater system upgrades, the elimination of ocean outfalls, and protections for Biscayne Bay. He led efforts to hold regional water agencies accountable following flood events and secured more than $740 million in funding for pump stations, flood mitigation, and drainage improvements, earning him the nickname "Flood Guru."

As Mayor of Sweetwater, Florida, Diaz continues to lead with action. He oversaw the installation of a state-of-the-art underground pump system that channels stormwater into Biscayne Bay, significantly reducing neighborhood flooding. This effort resulted in portions of Sweetwater being removed from FEMA's mandatory flood insurance zones, saving residents thousands of dollars annually.

In addition, Mayor Díaz secured state and federal backing for a comprehensive drainage master plan and continues to collaborate with the South Florida Water Management District and the Water Council. His unwavering dedication to forward-thinking water infrastructure has made Sweetwater a model of resilience and a leader in regional water management innovation.

House Scheduling Floor Time for EPA and Independent Agencies FY-2026 Appropriations

A Congressional mood swing is at play in the House Appropriations Committee's FY 2026 proposal. The majority has rejected business as usual and proposes to cut the EPA's budget by 23% from FY 2025 levels. The Committee advanced the proposal to the House floor, where it was adopted along party lines.

The Bill
H.R. 4754
Department of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2026

The Report
H. Rept. 119-215

The focus here is on the State and Tribal Grants Programs that help fund local water and sewer utility infrastructure development, known as the STAG grants program.

A key budget component is the appropriation amount for two assistance grants programs: Drinking Water and Clean Water State Revolving Fund Loan programs (DWSRF and CWSRF). The DWSRF appropriation is $894.7 million. With provision for $490.6 million, or 55% of the total directed to community project funding (CPF). The CWSRF appropriation is $1.2 billion with $558.2 million, or 46%, directed to CPF.

Congress has made capitalization grants in the SRF amounts available to states for several decades. Community project funding is an earmark mechanism employed by Congressionally elected officials to bring federal resources to the state and local jurisdictions they represent. SRF capitalization grants have been annually appropriated at around $2 billion for the two programs. What has become clear is that the level of funding has not been indexed to inflation such that the purchase power it brings to a single project is important but overall the policy has failed to keep up with infrastructure investment needs driven by population growth, inflation and increased regulatory compliance costs.

The SRF policy is still needed but should be recognized as a limited and fading influence on real world community infrastructure needs to support the water resources and sanitary needs of a developing economy.

While the House budget proposal would cut EPA by 23% the President's FY-2026 budget request would cut over 50% from the FY-2025 enacted level of funding. Still, the Senate is likely to set their own funding numbers that may differ from the House funding levels setting up a need to compromise. Any compromise between the House and Senate on SRF funding are likely to be more generaous than the Administration's budget request.

21st Century Public Water Infrastructure Investment

By: Rich Anderson

Local consumers are amid a utility affordability crisis, yet local government providers are spending more nominal dollars on utilities now than ever before. Census estimates indicate over $150 billion of local government spending in 2022 to provide water and sewer utility services and infrastructure. Capital construction in 2022 was $54 billion or 36% of total local expenditure. By 2024 capital construction spending reached $74.5 billion

The population of America increased 19% from 2000 to 2024, while local utility expenditures grew 141% from $62.5 billion in 2000 to $150.9 billion in 2022. Cities have increased spending to provide services to more people in more places. More than 80% of the nation's population is served by 16,000 public sewer systems and 87% are served by 50,000 public water systems (PWS): add more than 4 million miles of water and sewer pipes.

An analysis of Census data was conducted to characterize the magnitude and trajectory of local spending on water and sewer utilities, and more specifically on the capital construction investment portion of annual spending.

Summary Findings

Capital Construction Spending Levels on Local Water and Sewer Utilities, 2000-2024

Topline: **$967 Billion** Water and Sewer Utility Capital Construction

Drinking Water: $384 Billion (Construction)
- $306 Billion on pipes and treatment plants

Sewer & Wastewater: **$**583 Billion (Construction)
- **$**443 Billion on sewer lines/pumps and wastewater treatment plants

Trends in Capital Construction Spending Levels, 2000-2024

Topline: **216%**increase in local utility construction investment from 2000 ($23 billion) to 2024 ($74.5 billion.)

- **3% to 16%** expected annual growth in construction spending with an average 9.9% annual growth rate and 6% standard deviation.

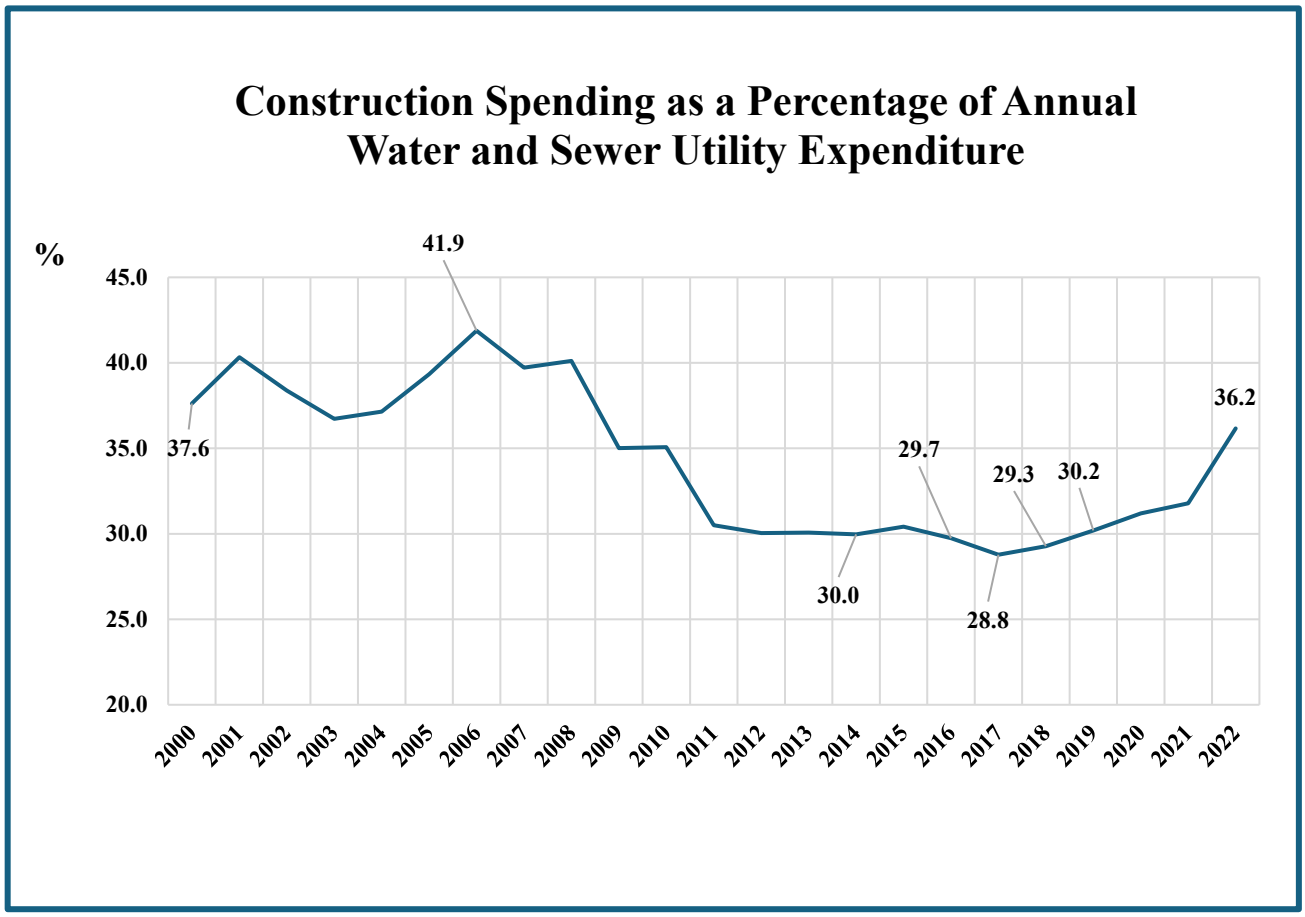
- The long-term average annual local construction spending from 2000 to 2022 is **34.4%** of total annual water and sewer utility expenditures, (a ± 4.4% standard deviation).

- Utility construction spending peaked early in 2006 at 41% of total annual utility spending for that year ($35.8 billion in construction out of a total utility expenditure of $85.5 billion).

- Construction spending as a percentage of total annual utility expenditures declined from 2008 until 2017 when it began to gradually increase.

- The impact of the Great Recession on utility capital construction spending has been both significant and long lasting.

- Recent increases in utility construction spending as a percentage of total annual spending have not yet reached 2006 levels and pre-Great Recession (2007-2008) spending levels. (Figure 2)



Industry Insights

A Return to Honest Science in Regulatory Decision-Making

By: *Anne Idsal Austin*

As debates about plastic materials heat up, too often we find activism – not science – guides regulatory decisions. Nowhere is this clearer than in the conversation around PVC water pipes, which have been safely used for over 70 years. Despite extensive peer-reviewed research confirming their safety, durability, and environmental benefits, PVC remains a target of misinformation.

Modern PVC pipes do not leach harmful chemicals like vinyl chloride – stringent EPA regulations and industry advancements since 1977 ensure that today's pipes consistently test below detectable limits. Claims about microplastics or phthalates are equally unfounded. PVC pipe is not made with phthalates and owing to its abrasion resistance – which is better than concrete, steel, and iron pipes – and smooth inner walls, it does not deteriorate time, preventing microplastics release and contributing to its durability and long-term performance.

In fact, PVC's performance is backed by reputable data. Studies from Utah State University show it has the lowest break rate among pipe materials and a service life exceeding 100 years. And a McKinsey study found PVC sewer pipes produce up to 45% fewer emissions than alternatives like concrete or ductile iron.

Yet, anti-plastic narratives continue to shape public perception and policy. This undermines progress and risks steering communities toward costlier, less sustainable options.

It's time for regulators to reaffirm their commitment to honest, evidence-based science. Decisions affecting public health and infrastructure must be guided by rigorous data, not fear or ideology. With millions of safety tests behind them, PVC pipes stand as a proven, sustainable solution. Restoring trust in science means rejecting misinformation and ensuring that policy reflects reality for the sake of communities, budgets, and the planet.

Submitted by: Uni-Bell PVC Pipe Association (Bruce Hollands)

To read the complete article see page 2 in the June 2025 edition of Construction News.

Anne Idsal Austin was former Principal Deputy Assistant Administrator for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Office of Air and Radiation (OAR) where she had a significant impact on clean air policy and regulation. Additionally, she was EPA Regional Administrator for Region 6, responsible for implementing federal environmental statutes and programs across Texas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Arkansas, and New Mexico. Ms. Austin also served as General Counsel for the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality.

Industry Insights

Rainplan

Rainplan empowers cities to combat localized flooding from urbanization while reducing the administrative burden on local governments—and enabling private property owners to be part of the solution. Our digital platform connects homeowners and property managers to stormwater incentives, vetted contractors, and personalized project support, making green infrastructure upgrades—such as turf removal, rain gardens, and permeable paving—easier and more accessible than ever.

But Rainplan doesn't just support residents—it protects city staff. By serving as a dedicated guide and customer service layer, we prevent confusion, complaints, and abandoned incentive applications from landing on municipal desks. We answer questions, navigate paperwork, and help property owners move from initial interest to completed projects—without requiring additional time or resources from city staff.

This hands-on support is especially valuable in high-need communities, where access to stormwater programs and contractors has historically been limited. Rainplan ensures equitable delivery through our Project Assurance services and flexible payment plans, designed for residents who may lack upfront capital but still want to take action against flooding and climate impacts.

Currently in **Brentwood, Maryland**, and **Raleigh, North Carolina**, Rainplan supports local programs through targeted outreach and hands-on application assistance—helping residents implement meaningful flood mitigation measures on their properties. On a commercial scale, in **Washington, D.C.**, we partner with **Lyft** to incorporate stormwater best practices into their city-wide bicycle stations, reducing runoff across dozens of public-facing sites.

As mayors and municipal leaders work to build resilient, equitable infrastructure, Rainplan is a ready partner—working where it matters most: at the parcel level, with the people.

Discover partnership opportunities at myrainplan.com/partners.

Mayors Water Council
2025 Mayoral Membership

Co-Chairs

Danene Sorace, Mayor of Lancaster, PA

John P. Marchand, Mayor of Livermore, CA

Mark Myers, Mayor of Greenwood, IN

Steven L. Reed
Mayor of Montgomery, AL

Becky Daggett
Mayor of Flagstaff, AZ

Mark Freeman
Mayor of Mesa, AZ

John. P Marchand
Mayor of Livermore, CA

Justin Brooks
Mayor of Erie, CO

Joe Ganim
Mayor of Bridgeport, CT

Joy Cooper
Mayor of Hallandale Beach, FL

Alix Delsume
Mayor of North Miami, FL

Jose "Pepe" Diaz
Sweetwater, FL

Kevin C. Richardson
Mayor of Lake Barrington, IL

John D. Noak
Mayor of Romeoville, IL

Mark W. Myers
Mayor of Greenwood, IN

Deborah Whitfield
Mayor of Lawrence, IN

LaToya Cantrell
Mayor of New Orleans, LA

Leirion Gaylor Baird
Mayor of Lincoln, NE

J. Christian Bollwage
Mayor of Elizabeth, NJ

David R. Mayer
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Timothy McDonough
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Danene Sorace
Mayor of Lancaster, PA

Mary Lou Pauly
Mayor of Issaquah, WA

Angela Birney
Mayor of Redmond, WA

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2025 Water Development Advisory Board of The Mayors Water Council

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Mayors Water Council

A Task Force of The U.S. Conference of Mayors

The Mayors Water Council (MWC) provides a forum for discussions of issues impacting how cities provide safe, adequate and affordable water and wastewater services and infrastructure in America's Principal Cities in the 21st Century. It is open to all Mayors, and functions as a USCM Task Force. The MWC focuses on water resources issues, including: watershed management; water supply planning; water infrastructure financing; rehabilitation of surface and sub-surface water infrastructure; water conservation; wetlands construction and education programs; water system program management and asset management. The MWC will continue to develop nonpartisan local government positions on Federal legislation, regulations and policy. The MWC acts through the USCM Environment Committee, and other Committees as appropriate, to propose and adopt resolutions on water related matters that benefits the nation's cities.

For more information about USCM's Mayors Water Council please contact Rich Anderson (randerson@usmayors.org) and Kassidy Klein (kklein@usmayors.org)