



# **Infrastructure investment supports safe drinking water and local jobs**

by Bruce Hawk

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ALTON - As the local water and/or wastewater provider, the work of our team touches every one of our customers daily. We ensure safe, reliable service to make your morning coffee, wash your dishes, flush your toilet and other daily activities which often are taken for granted. This responsibility to our customers is something we take seriously. It's why we continue to invest in our critical water and wastewater systems.

Last year, Illinois American Water invested over \$122 million to install or rehabilitate more than 42 miles of water and sewer main. Water treatment processes, equipment, security and technology were also upgraded to comply with drinking water standards and enhance system reliability and resilience. In addition, hundreds of fire hydrants and water meters were installed or replaced across the state.

Similar investments are needed across the country as critical infrastructure is reaching the end of its useful life and water quality standards are becoming stricter.

Unfortunately, some municipal water and wastewater systems struggle to make continued investments due to lack of funds, artificially low rates and what their community leaders may perceive as more pressing priorities. When investments are delayed or ignored, water quality and service reliability can be impacted, hindering fire protection, economic development and public health.

Last year, a national study of drinking water quality violations was published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. The study – “National Trends in Drinking Water Quality” – is the first-ever study to assess trends in drinking water quality violations across several decades, and includes analysis of factors that lead to higher rates of violations.

USA Today, The New York Times, Science Magazine and other notable media outlets covered the findings. A reoccurring theme reported was “Privately owned utilities are less vulnerable to violations than systems under public ownership. The probability of a violation for a privately owned utility is significantly lower than a government owned utility.”

In 2016, 198 water systems in Illinois had water quality violations — about 73 percent were received by public systems. Our team did not receive one, NOT ONE, notice of violation — this is true for 2017 and 2018 as well. We are very proud of our track record and commitment to over 1.3 million persons.

In addition to ensuring public health, we contribute to the communities we serve through taxes, community donations and job creation. In 2018, American Water partnered with the University of Illinois Regional Economic Applications Laboratory to analyze the company’s impact on the economy in Illinois over a five-year period (2013–17). The study included data for not only Illinois American Water operations but also all American Water subsidiaries operating in Illinois. The study showed American Water’s overall economic impact was \$223 million to \$245 million per year, for a total, estimated economic impact of \$1.17 billion.

Communities with solid infrastructure already in place are also more capable to handle growth and attract new businesses. In 2019, Illinois American Water expects to invest

over \$100 million across its Illinois service areas. We are committed to the communities we serve.

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