

# **Durbin Statement On Senate Passage Of Drinking Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Act**

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WASHINGTON – U.S. Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL) today released the following statement after the Senate passed the *Drinking Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Act of 2021*:

“The *Drinking Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Act* will begin to address the epidemic of lead in our nation’s drinking water. It also offers towns like Centreville, Illinois, a chance to fix their broken pumps, shore up drainage ditches, and begin addressing water issues that have been overlooked for far too long. It gives on-the-ground technical assistance to disadvantaged communities struggling with their water systems, and provides grants for repairing broken and outdated water infrastructure. This bill is a down-payment on the infrastructure every American needs.

“Bottom line: this is a bill that authorizes spending. We still need to enact an appropriations bill in a manner like the Biden Jobs Plan, which will make these aspirations a reality.”

The *Drinking Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Act* authorizes \$35 billion in funding to improve access to safe drinking water, fortify our water infrastructure against extreme weather, lower the cost of utility bills, and rebuild aging water systems across America. More than 40 percent of authorized funds will go to small, rural, and disadvantaged communities, many of which have not seen water infrastructure improvements in decades.

Durbin wrote two amendments that were included in today’s bill. The first amendment will prioritize funds for towns like Centreville within a new grant program created by the bill. Durbin’s amendment requires the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to prioritize issuing grant funds to non-profit groups serving communities that demonstrate unresolved waste/storm water issues lasting more than 10 years; are considered financially distressed; face the cumulative burden of stormwater and wastewater issues; or have previously failed to access federal assistance due to cost-match requirements. This amendment will help Centreville qualify for on-site expertise to help address its problems.

The second amendment will help Joliet, Illinois, address their depleting water supply. Joliet is working to form a regional water partnership with neighboring towns to extend the benefit of a proposed Lake Michigan water source connection. Durbin’s amendment

provides potential grant support for Joliet's plan by amending the Midsize and Large Drinking Water System Infrastructure Resilience and Sustainability Program in the bill to include support for the formation of regional water partnerships.

Recent [reports](#) indicate that eight in ten Illinoisans live in a community where lead has been found in the drinking water in the last year six years. Chicago alone has more than 380,000 lead service lines, the most of any city in the country.

Earlier this month, Durbin visited Centreville, Illinois, which has faced chronic wastewater and storm water issues for decades. Ordinary rainfall can overflow the town's broken sewer systems and flood residents' basements and lawns with raw sewage. Durbin heard from residents about the horror of stepping out of their front door in the morning to discover pools of sewage seeping up through the grass in their front yards.