

Water Quality Financing Act Passes Subcommittee

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Legislation Introduced by Reps. Ellen Tauscher and Jim Oberstar Increases Federal Funding for Clean Water Infrastructure

Washington, DC - Today, major water quality legislation introduced by Congresswoman Ellen Tauscher (D-Calif.) and Congressman Jim Oberstar (D-Minn), Chairman of the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee, was passed by voice vote in the Water Resources Subcommittee. Over the last four Congresses, Rep. Tauscher has been pushing this bill to reauthorize the Clean Water State Revolving Fund.

“Our nation’s clean water infrastructure is in jeopardy because of the federal government’s failure over the past several years to do its part and dedicate all the resources necessary to guarantee our water system. After years of pushing legislation to address the problem, I am so happy to join Chairman Oberstar in introducing the Water Quality Financing Act of 2007.” said Rep. Tauscher. “Now we have the opportunity to do the right thing, and I am confident the new Congress will do it.”

Tauscher's legislation was held up in past Congresses because of Davis-Bacon provisions in the bill — protections that would guarantee workers on these water improvement projects are paid the prevailing local wages.

During Subcommittee consideration, Rep. Baker (R-La.), the Ranking Member of the Subcommittee, offered an amendment to strike the Davis-Bacon protections in the legislation. Rep. Tauscher spoke against the amendment and defended the Davis-Bacon prevailing wage law as an essential tool to ensuring a fair standard of living for those working in the building trades. Baker's amendment failed on a voice vote.

The Water Quality Financing Act of 2007 will bridge the multi-billion dollar gap between current federal funding and local communities' needs. EPA's own estimates show that local communities are facing an over \$400 billion gap in water infrastructure investments over the next twenty years.

The legislation reauthorizes the Clean Water State Revolving Fund, an important financing tool that helps communities and counties meet their growing needs for clean water by providing them funding to build and maintain a wastewater infrastructure. Though the program has continued to receive an annual appropriation from Congress since it expired in 1994, a staggering disparity remains between the federal investment in wastewater infrastructure and communities' and counties' actual needs.

The Water Quality Financing Act of 2007 specifically:

- Authorizes \$20 billion in Federal grants over five years to capitalize Clean Water State Revolving Funds.
- Requires a state to use part of its funding to provide additional subsidization for disadvantaged communities.
- Encourages long-term asset management planning and financing that will ensure sustainable systems and the potential to reduce overall capital and operation and maintenance costs.
- Renews the requirement that contractors and subcontractors on treatment works projects constructed with assistance from the state revolving funds will be paid not less than prevailing wages, as determined under the Davis-Bacon Act.

The legislation will next be considered by the Full House Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure's.

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