



U.S. Chamber of Commerce

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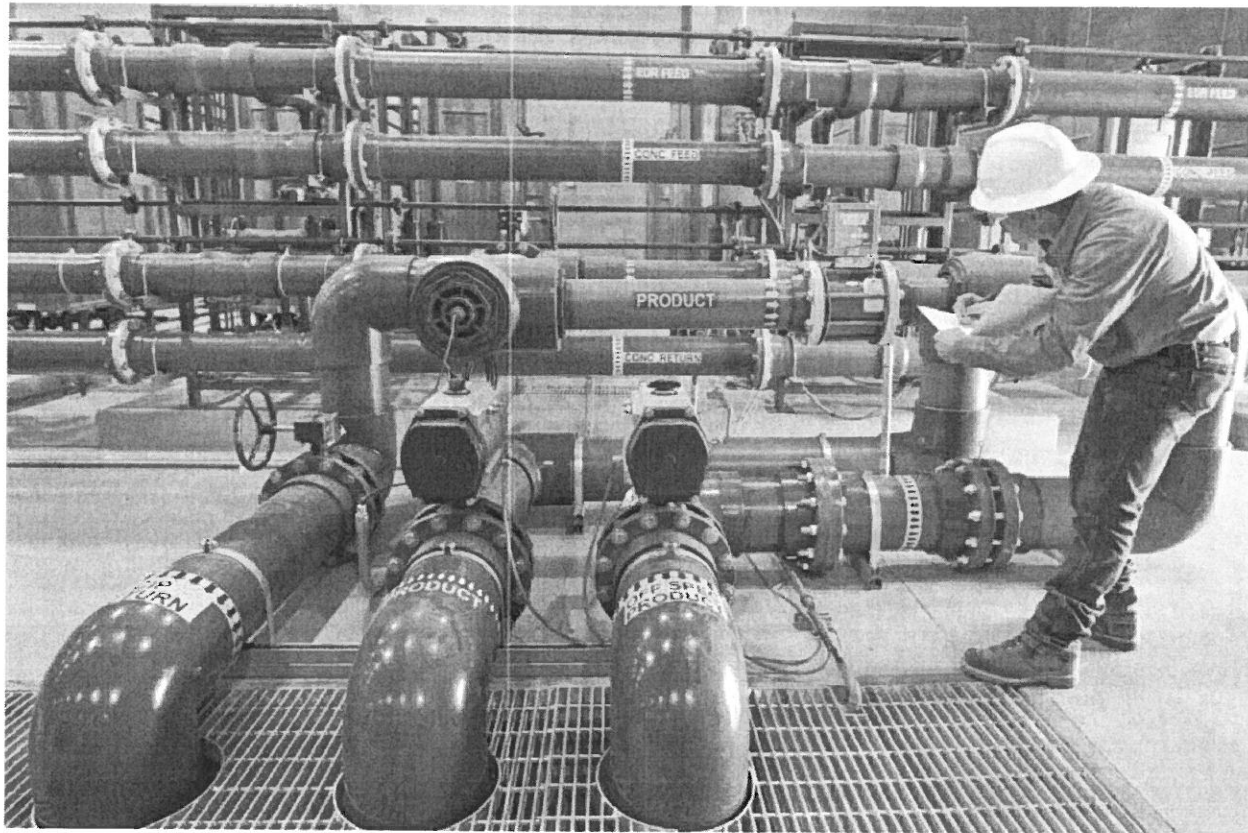
Why Water Infrastructure Investments Would Make a Big Splash

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A worker takes water readings at a water treatment facility in West Valley City, UT.

Photo credit: George Frey/Bloomberg.

Infrastructure Week is here again, a time when swaths of stakeholders – from local, state, and federal leaders to think tanks, trade associations, and businesses large and small – unite to call attention to the importance of bringing our infrastructure up to 21st century standards. It's a conversation that happens more than one week a year, but this week, the dialogue is more focused than ever on developing an aggressive, proactive game plan for modernizing America's infrastructure in a way that brings together the best of the private sector and government at all levels.

Almost every facet of our nation's infrastructure system is in need of investment, including our roads, bridges, ports, and railways. America's water infrastructure, in particular, desperately needs attention. When you turn the tap on in your kitchen, take a drink from a water fountain, or flush a toilet, you are being served by our country's water infrastructure. These systems have made our lives easier, but their prevalence has also lulled us into a false sense of security. The hard reality is that these systems are aging and require significant investment.

In the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) latest Infrastructure Report Card, U.S. drinking water systems received a "D" grade, with ASCE citing an estimated 240,000 water main breaks each year that waste over two trillion gallons of treated drinking water. A recent ASCE study estimates that our country's water infrastructure needs an additional \$82 billion every year over the next 10 years in order to keep pace with consumer demand.

This investment gap provides a unique challenge on all fronts, but closing the gap is something the vast majority of Americans believe should be a priority. In fact, a new survey from the Value of Water (VOW) campaign finds that 88% of voters think rebuilding water infrastructure is very important.

The needs may seem staggering, but here is the good news: Investment in water infrastructure is directly linked to economic growth. VOW found that closing the investment gap over a 10-year timeframe would generate over \$220 billion in annual economic activity and create and sustain 1.3 million jobs. Indeed, every \$1 spent on improving the country's water infrastructure generates \$6 in returns, and every job created in the water sector supports the creation of another 3.68 jobs in the national economy. Investing in water can make both our infrastructure and our economy stronger.

As is the case for infrastructure modernization on the whole, the costs of inaction are great. Just a single day of water service disruption would result in a loss of \$43.5 billion in sales and a \$22.5 billion loss in the national gross domestic product. Think about it this way: One-fifth of the U.S. economy would essentially come to a standstill if it did not have access to reliable and clean water.

Unfortunately, there is no mythical pot of federal funding that will solve the nation's infrastructure challenges, so it is important to put the needs in perspective. Every year, regulated water companies cumulatively invest billions into their water systems; the six largest companies alone invest a combined \$2.7 billion annually. That \$2.7 billion is more than the current total federal appropriation for the clean water and drinking water state revolving fund (SRF) programs, which is about \$2 billion.

As those figures indicate, laying the groundwork for continued private sector investment – and encouraging more of it moving forward – will be a crucial component of an infrastructure strategy.

Research from PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) found that a few changes to federal law could have an enormous impact. These changes include encouraging regionalization in the water sector through the SRF programs, lifting the cap on private activity bonds, and expanding eligibility of the Clean Water State Revolving Fund to all water service providers. PwC found that these changes could lead to an additional \$58-\$68 billion in incremental private water and wastewater infrastructure investment.

This Infrastructure Week is about the choice between action and inaction. "The future won't wait, and neither can we," is the driving message for this year's events, and it is our fervent hope that policymakers will soon show renewed willingness to be proactive, to offer creative solutions, and to tackle the infrastructure challenge head on.

Truly addressing our nation's growing infrastructure problems will require leadership and cooperation among all levels of government, increased engagement by the private sector, and an involved American public. The fix may not be easy, but knowing how closely America's infrastructure is intertwined with the prosperity of our economy, our businesses, and our families, it's bound to be worth it.

About the Authors



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About Us

Resources

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RELIABLE

[Find Out About Water's Value](#) ►

The Value of Water Campaign is supported by top leaders from across the water industry committed to raising awareness about the importance of water and the often invisible water challenges threatening our country.



Imagine a Day Without Water

October 10, 2018

[Join Us For Imagine a Day Without Water](#)

On October 10, 2018 hundreds of organizations around the country will participate in the fourth annual Imagine a Day Without Water, a nationwide day of education and advocacy about the value of water. Won't you join us?

What is the value of water?

Essential. Reliable. Invaluable. Water—it's the thread that weaves together our daily lives. It keeps our communities healthy, our cities running, and our economies growing. Water is a cup of coffee, the produce aisle, better production, increased exports, and greater American strength. While essential, water infrastructure is largely invisible. Few people realize what it takes to treat and deliver drinking water every day or how wastewater is cleaned so that it can be safely reused or returned to the environment. The high quality of life we enjoy in America would not be possible without water and the infrastructure that fuels it.

[Learn more about Water's Value >](#)

64,240 gallons

HOW MUCH WATER THE AVERAGE AMERICAN USES IN A YEAR

Source: WATER.ORG

Our infrastructure is at risk.

One of the crowning achievements of the 20th century was building reliable water and wastewater systems. Since then, public and private utilities across the country have been putting people to work to construct, operate, and maintain the water and wastewater infrastructure that Americans rely on daily. After working around the clock for more than 100 years, this infrastructure is aging and failing. In America today, a water main breaks

every 2 minutes. The good news is that investment in water infrastructure puts people to work and builds a stronger America.

[Learn more about The Challenge and The Opportunity >](#)

\$4.8 trillion

NEEDS TO BE INVESTED IN WATER INFRASTRUCTURE OVER THE
NEXT TWENTY YEARS TO MAINTAIN A STATE OF GOOD REPAIR

Source: AMERICAN SOCIETY OF CIVIL ENGINEERS

Together we are the solution.

The Value of Water Campaign educates and inspires the nation about how water is essential, invaluable, and in need of investment. Spearheaded by top leaders in the water industry, the Value of Water Campaign is building public and political will for investment in America's water infrastructure. Coordinated by the US Water Alliance, we educate and engage the public on the importance of clean, safe, and reliable water and help ensure quality water service for future generations.

[Learn more About Us >](#)

68,873

THE NUMBER OF DRINKING WATER AND WASTEWATER SYSTEMS IN
THE U.S.

Source: EPA

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