

**STATEMENT OF
CHAIRWOMAN EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON
SUBCOMMITTEE ON WATER RESOURCES & ENVIRONMENT
HEARING – SUSTAINABLE WASTEWATER INFRASTRUCTURE
FEBRUARY 4, 2009, 10AM
2167 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING**

Good Morning.

I call the Subcommittee to order.

I welcome everyone to the first meeting of the Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment for the 111th Congress.

Today, the Subcommittee meets to explore water-efficient and energy-efficient technologies that can be incorporated into the nation's system of wastewater infrastructure to improve the overall cost-effectiveness of modern wastewater treatment, as well as promote sustainability.

However, as this is the first meeting of the Subcommittee this Congress, I believe this is a good opportunity to outline our near-term agenda, as well as our efforts to

address many of the water resources challenges of this country.

First, let me say how pleased I am to return as the Chairwoman of the Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment. I look forward to serving on this Subcommittee with each of my colleagues, learning of their own individual water resource needs, and working together to address many of their concerns.

I am also pleased to be rejoined by my colleague, Congressman John Boozman of Arkansas – the ranking Republican of the Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment.

Ladies and Gentleman, this Subcommittee has the broadest agenda of any of the Transportation Subcommittees.

Generally speaking, the Subcommittee is responsible for Corps of Engineers' projects and authorities, EPA's Clean

Water and Superfund programs, brownfields, the Tennessee Valley Authority, the St. Lawrence Seaway, and programs carried out by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Similar to last Congress, this Subcommittee will continue to have an active agenda, and explore many of the water resources and environmental challenges faced by our nation.

In addition, the Subcommittee will explore how the infrastructure authorities under its jurisdiction are critical in restoring both the economic and environmental health of the nation.

Ladies and gentlemen, starting with today's hearing, the Subcommittee will return to some of the unfinished work of the previous Congress.

My plan is to expeditiously move legislation on the Clean Water State Revolving Fund, and to report a bill similar to the Water Quality Financing Act of the 110th Congress to the House floor before the spring district work period.

In addition, the Subcommittee will quickly reconsider other bipartisan legislative proposals from the previous Congress that were not enacted into law – such as the Beach Protection Act, the Sewer Overflow Community Right to Know Act, and legislation to reauthorize appropriations to address combined sewer overflows and alternative sources of water.

This year, the Subcommittee will also start the process for drafting a new Water Resources Development Act for the Corps of Engineers. To that end, I encourage my colleagues to consider their individual water resources challenges, and whether these could be addressed by the nation's leading water resource agency – the Army Corps of Engineers.

Finally, the Subcommittee will continue its oversight responsibility, and should soon announce hearings on the forthcoming Report of the National Committee on Levee Safety, as well as on recent events surrounding, and future prospects for, the Tennessee Valley Authority.

In his inaugural address, President Obama challenged us all. He asked us, both citizens and policymakers, to seek opportunities in the trying times before us.

Over the past year, it's been clear that there is a heightened need for government action. Nowhere is this more clear than with regards to infrastructure spending. Against a backdrop of a huge gap in water infrastructure spending, investment in the nation's wastewater systems provides jobs, and results in cleaner rivers and a healthier public.

But to paraphrase the President, to say that government is the only answer is to be as wrong as saying that government is the problem. These two positions miss the

point entirely. Instead, we must ask how we can make government work so as to efficiently and effectively address our nation's problems.

And so it's on this point that we should seize the opportunity to solve our multi-faceted problems by enabling the federal government to be an agent of change. Economic recovery resources should not just be used to simply provide jobs – instead these resources can and should also be vehicles for long-term economic growth and environmental sustainability.

It is in our national interest to incentivize wastewater treatment facilities so that their operators make them more sustainable: more energy efficient, more water efficient, to encourage stormwater mitigation, and to use green planning, design and construction.

In today's hearing we will hear testimony from our witnesses on sustainable technology and approaches in the wastewater treatment sector. Much of this technology

and many of these approaches are not utilized, or even widely considered, across our wastewater system.

Promoting a sustainable wastewater infrastructure not only yields desired environmental results, but promotes a market for advanced, energy- and water-efficient technologies.

Members of the Subcommittee, when it comes to this issue, we can do it all. We can reclaim our responsibility to rebuilding our wastewater infrastructure, while at the same time spending our resources more wisely. We can achieve cleaner water while expending less energy, releasing fewer greenhouse gases, conserving water, and encouraging the development of technology and a resurgence of our manufacturing sector. And all of this means that localities across this country will, across the long-term, have lower costs – critical in this economic crisis.

These approaches make environmental sense, and they make sense to our bottom-lines. This is a way forward that I think we would all want to take.

Thank you. I yield to the Ranking Member, Mr. Boozman from Arkansas.