



International Union of Operating Engineers

AFFILIATED WITH THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR AND CONGRESS OF INDUSTRIAL ORGANIZATIONS

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The Honorable Peter DeFazio
2134 Rayburn House Office Building
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The Honorable Grace F. Napolitano
1610 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Don Young
2314 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Katko
2457 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives DeFazio, Young, Katko, and Napolitano:

The International Union of Operating Engineers deeply appreciates your history of bipartisan leadership to develop water-infrastructure legislation. We are also pleased to support your work to reauthorize the nation's Clean Water Act authorities through the Water Quality Protection and Job Creation Act of 2019.

The International Union of Operating Engineers (IUOE) represents nearly 400,000 members in over 120 local unions across the United States and Canada, thousands of whom operate heavy equipment in the construction sector. In fact, every day thousands of Operating Engineers are building the nation's water treatment facilities, utility lines, pump stations, and other components of the national system that captures and cleans stormwater and wastewater. In addition, Stationary Engineers of the IUOE maintain and operate both public and private wastewater systems in places all across the country.

The need for wastewater investments is well documented and the problem is severe. To provide just one example, as a result of combined sewer overflows, *over 22 billion gallons of raw, untreated sewage enters the Great Lakes every year*, spoiling the places where we fish, swim, and draw our drinking water. Congress must address this environmental and human health problem by investing in wastewater infrastructure, including containment and treatment of these combined-sewer overflows in the Great Lakes region.

The Water Quality Protection and Job Creation Act builds on the nation's most robust and successful program in wastewater infrastructure, the State Revolving Fund program. The State Revolving Funds have successfully delivered water- and wastewater-infrastructure funding to communities of all sizes for a generation. On the campaign trail in 2016, President Trump committed to "triple funding for state revolving loan fund programs to help states and local governments upgrade critical drinking water and wastewater infrastructure."



Democrats and Republicans – particularly the leaders of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee – have jointly identified the problem and worked successfully over the years to craft bipartisan solutions to address those needs, regularly passing water resources legislation, which has in a couple of important instances incorporated modest improvements to broader water and wastewater policy. Enactment of your bill, which includes new, higher authorization levels, is a critical step to guide the nation’s investment in wastewater infrastructure.

The Water Quality Protection and Job Creation Act of 2019 authorizes investments of:

- \$20 billion for the State Revolving Funds over the next five years
- \$1.5 billion to assist water pollution control agencies
- \$1 billion to fight nonpoint sources of water pollution
- \$375 million to support alternative wastewater projects, including reuse projects

Despite a gradual improvement in the state of the construction economy over the last eight years, there are currently 8,000 fewer workers engaged in water and sewer system construction than there were prior to the recession. The construction unemployment rate is the second-highest of any sector in the economy, second only to agriculture (not seasonally adjusted). The point is, thousands of Operating Engineers and other craftworkers are trained and ready to go to work.

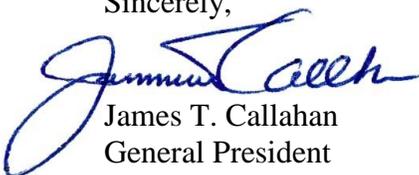
Average wages for production and nonsupervisory workers in water and sewer system construction reached over \$27 per hour in December, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Those wage rates are over 17% higher than wages for production and nonsupervisory workers in the overall private sector. Members of the Operating Engineers usually earn more than the average wage rate in the sector, and our remuneration packages always include health care, pension, and training investments.

Congress must rebuild America, create good-paying jobs, clean our water, and strengthen our communities by making a dramatic investment in clean-water infrastructure. Infrastructure does not need gimmicks; infrastructure needs money. That is why the focus of your legislation on investment levels is the right one.

The International Union of Operating Engineers supports the Water Quality Protection and Job Creation Act, and looks forward to working with you to enact it into law in this 116th Congress.

Thank you again for your leadership.

Sincerely,



James T. Callahan
General President