

America's Water Infrastructure Act of 2018

Summary from the Office of U.S. Senator Cory Booker

Topline Summary:

- *America's Water Infrastructure Act of 2018 (AWIA)* makes much-needed investments in water infrastructure systems across the country.
- It reauthorizes the ongoing work of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) for activities ranging from flood control to ship navigability.
- The legislation also addresses critical priorities such as: providing clean drinking water, modernizing wastewater infrastructure, funding programs to make water infrastructure more resilient to storms, and farmland irrigation.
- Also, as the country faces response and recovery from the impact of “monster” Hurricane Florence, this bill gives the Corps new tools to assist in emergency response and post disaster recovery and clean up, and improve communities’ resilience to future storms.

Senator Booker Priorities:

- Re-authorizes, for the first time in 22 years, the Drinking Water State Revolving Loan Fund that provides for needed investments in communities across the country. The bill would also nearly double the size of the program from \$1 billion to \$1.95 billion by 2021.
- Extends for five years the Buy America requirements of the drinking water state revolving loan fund to ensure American made products are used to construct projects funded through the program
- **Senator Duckworth and Senator Booker [coauthored a provision](#)** that expands the lead in schools testing program to provide schools with additional assistance to address lead contamination, including the replacement of drinking water fountains.
- Expands the existing \$60 million annual small and disadvantaged communities program to allow communities to test and treat for contamination in water systems and underground sources of drinking water
- Authorizes \$550 million for sewer overflow control grants.

Senator Booker's Provisions:

Sec. 4107. Assistance for individual household decentralized wastewater systems of individuals with low or moderate income.

This section authored by Senator Booker was included based on [Senator Booker, Capito, and Jones' Residential Decentralized Wastewater Improvement Act](#) and an amendment filed by Senator Booker during the May EPW committee markup.

- The language ensures that low- and moderate-income households are eligible within the Clean Water State Revolving Fund to receive funds to connect their homes to existing

wastewater infrastructure or install or upgrade individually-owned decentralized wastewater systems.

- Senator Booker has seen firsthand, in rural parts of states that are home to low-income, predominantly black communities, less than half the population is connected to a municipal water system. Many of these families' septic systems fail and they are forced to dump their sewage behind their home.
- In addition to tainting the water supply and harming the local environment, this is leading to the spread of intestinal parasites such as hookworm commonly thought only to be a problem in developing countries.
- More than a million homes across the U.S. lack adequate plumbing, and nearly 200,000 lack a sewage system altogether.
- While Senator Booker will continue to work to advance the comprehensive Residential Decentralized Wastewater Improvement Act, this provision is an important step toward addressing this urgent Environmental Justice issue.

Sec. 4304. Water infrastructure and workforce investment:

Senator [Booker and Capito's Innovative Water Workforce Development Act](#) is established as a two year pilot program authorizing \$1 million for each of FY19 and FY20.

- This new program directs the EPA and the United States Army Corps to establish a competitive water utility workforce development grant program.
- Supports public water and wastewater utilities that are facing challenges such as a high retiring workforce rate or are located in areas with high unemployment.
- Provides support for targeted internship, apprenticeship, pre-apprenticeship, and post-secondary bridge programs.
- Encourages grant recipients to collaborate with labor organizations, community colleges, and other training and education institutions to provide on-the-job training and other skill development to ensure post-secondary success.

Sec. 1149. Inclusion of alternative measures for aquatic ecosystem restoration.

Senators Booker and Capito (R-WV) coauthored this provision that will require the Army Corps of Engineers to consider use of natural and nature-based solutions under the Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration program.

- In the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy, the Army Corps in the northeast recommended expanding from traditional structural risk reduction measures to include more emphasis on nonstructural, natural, and nature-based systems.

- Expanding use of these techniques is critical to ensuring that communities can endure extreme weather, mitigate flooding, reduce other negative impacts on communities, and provide a significant return on investment.

Sec. 4201 subsection (b): Innovative Financing for State Loan Funds:

Senator Booker is the lead Democrat on [Senator Boozman's Securing Required Funding for Water Infrastructure Now Act](#). Sen. Boozman and Booker successfully included a two year \$10 million SRF WIN pilot program authorization.

- The SRF WIN Act pilot program will provide a direct path to providing increases in funding for our nation's State Revolving Fund (SRF) programs that will help address the backlog of long-awaited local infrastructure projects.
- The SRF WIN Act pilot program will allow State Infrastructure Authorities to utilize the financing available through WIFIA and the SRF to fund multiple local infrastructure projects at once, compete against other projects for a larger pot of funding, and help address the growing backlog of water infrastructure projects.
- This approach will complement the already successful Water Infrastructure Financing and Innovation Act (WIFIA) program.

Sec. 1203. Expedited Completion:

Senator Booker successfully included language that will direct the Army Corps to expedite completion of the feasibility studies for the following critical Army Corps infrastructure projects in New Jersey:

- Project for flood risk management, Rahway River Basin, New Jersey
- Project for ecosystem restoration, Warren Glen Dam Removal, Musconetcong River, New Jersey
- The Hudson-Raritan Estuary Comprehensive Restoration Project, New Jersey and New York.
- Project for navigation, New York-New Jersey Harbor and Tributaries Focus Area.

Sec. 1320: Passaic River Federal Navigation Channel, New Jersey:

Senator Booker successfully included a section that de-authorizes parts of the Passaic River to help the EPA and local stakeholders advance the cleanup of the river.

- As required by EPA's 2015 Record of Decision for the cleanup of Lower 8 Miles of the Passaic River Superfund site, certain sections of the river needed to be deauthorized By the Army Corps because they would no longer be required to be navigable waterways.