

The Honorable Susan Collins
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Patty Murray
Vice Chair
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Rosa L. DeLauro
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Chair
Interior and Environment Subcommittee
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Mike Simpson
Chair
Interior and Environment Subcommittee
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Jeff Merkley
Ranking Member
Interior and Environment Subcommittee
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Chellie Pingree
Ranking Member
Interior and Environment Subcommittee
U.S. House of Representatives

May 7, 2026

Dear Chairs Collins, Cole, Murkowski, and Simpson, Vice Chair Murray, and Ranking Members DeLauro, Merkley and Pingree:

We, the undersigned 52 organizations and local leaders, urge you to support critical investments in drinking water infrastructure in West Virginia in the Fiscal Year 2027 appropriations bills. We represent and work with communities across the state that have lacked consistent clean, safe drinking water access, adequate wastewater systems, and trust in their water systems for decades.

West Virginia's water crisis has been well documented for decades.¹ Communities have dealt with discolored water that stains their household appliances, ruins their clothing, and causes them to break out in skin rashes. This problem not only exists for individuals who pay for municipal water, but also impacts residents on well water whose natural sources have been tainted by aging abandoned industry infrastructure like old coal mines or improperly maintained water treatment facilities. Many residents on well water cannot afford to fix their well systems, dig new ones, or move, so they are forced to rely on purchasing their own bottled water as well.

Community members across the state, particularly in the Southern Coalfields, have been ringing the alarm about the need for a large infusion of funding and technical expertise to address the state's water crisis. In July 2025, Representative Riley Moore moved to direct the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to brief Congress on the resources available for the region to combat the high prevalence of drinking water violations.² In February 2026, CBS spotlighted the crisis on 60 Minutes, which drew national attention to the issue.³

¹ [wvgazette.com/report_for_america/money-down-the-drain-wv-losing-most-of-water-it-produces/article_40dbcf49-2f61-56d6-8146-ae088fa2d436.html](https://www.wvgazette.com/report_for_america/money-down-the-drain-wv-losing-most-of-water-it-produces/article_40dbcf49-2f61-56d6-8146-ae088fa2d436.html)

² rileymoore.house.gov/media/press-releases/moores-amendment-addressing-water-crisis-southern-coalfields-passes-house

³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AFtxQoBAGOU>

According to the EPA's 2023 Drinking Water Infrastructure Needs Survey and Assessment, West Virginia needs to invest \$4.5 billion in drinking water infrastructure over the next two decades.⁴ A nationwide academic study found that Wyoming, Boone, and Mercer county were the top three ranking counties for drinking water violations in the entire country, and citizens are feeling the impacts.⁵ Residents in the Southern Coalfield counties often are forced to rely on buying their own bottled water to have access to safe, reliable water as they cannot trust the resources they are paying for.

The current 2026 Intended Use Plan developed by the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection (WVDEP) requests a total of \$460 million worth of project funding to bring these communities onto even ground with the rest of the country.⁶ **We are asking you today for \$250 million which would address the most pressing projects in each of the Southern Coalfield counties.**

Piecemeal directed spending for line enhancements are insufficient to address this crisis. We need large investments in order to even scratch the surface of the issues our communities face. We have submitted the following language to the West Virginia congressional delegation's appropriations request forms.

- \$250 million shall be for grants to the State of West Virginia to address drinking water and wastewater infrastructure needs: Provided, That: at least 50 percent of that funding shall go to projects within the Counties of Boone, Fayette, Lincoln, Logan, McDowell, Mercer, Mingo, Raleigh, and Wyoming; Provided further, That: in making awards, the State of West Virginia shall prioritize projects in areas with: (1) low mean household income levels; (2) high poverty levels; (3) high levels of Safe Drinking Water Act violations; and (4) water quality issues that have been in existence for more than 10 years.
- \$5 million shall be for a study examining barriers to access to clean drinking water in Southern West Virginia, and for the development of a report summarizing the findings of the study: Provided, That the study area shall include the Counties of Boone, Fayette, Lincoln, Logan, McDowell, Mercer, Mingo, Raleigh, and Wyoming; Provided further, That the study shall: (1) identify and map all communities in the study area lacking access to safe, clean, affordable drinking water; (2) for all identified communities, determine the current source(s) of drinking water and the factors contributing to it being unsafe, unclean, and/or unaffordable; (3) for all identified communities, determine potential solutions to the lack of safe, clean, affordable drinking water and estimate the costs associated with implementing those solutions; Provided further, That \$1 million of the funding shall be for grants to local nonprofit organizations to conduct surveys of impacted community members and public service districts in the study area, in order to better understand their drinking water concerns and preferred solutions, the results of which shall be provided to the EPA and incorporated into the study report; Provided further, That the Administrator of the EPA shall file the report summarizing the findings of the study with the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations, the Committee on Energy and Commerce of the House, and the Committee on Environment and Public Works of the Senate no later than February 1, 2028.

We hope that you will consider including funding to address West Virginia's water crisis at this level in the Fiscal Year 2027 appropriations bills.

Sincerely,

Allegheny Keystone Initiative
Allegheny-Blue Ridge Alliance (ABRA)
Alliance for Appalachia
American Friends Service Committee - WV

⁴ https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2023-09/Seventh%20DWINSA_September2023_Final.pdf

⁵ <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/risa.70012>

⁶ <https://dep.wv.gov/WWE/Programs/SRF/Documents/DWTRF/FY2026%20Drinking%20Water%20IUP%20Draft.pdf>

Appalachian Citizens' Law Center
Appalachian Mountain Advocates
Appalachian Voices
Bear Creek Consulting
Blue Ridge Watershed Coalition
Buckhannon River Watershed Association
Cacapon Institute
Christians For The Mountains
Climate Justice Alliance
Delegate Anitra Hamilton, District 81, West Virginia House of Delegates
Delegate Christopher Toney, District 43, West Virginia House of Delegates
Delegate Evan Hansen, District 79, West Virginia House of Delegates
Delegate Jordan Bridges, District 33, West Virginia House of Delegates
Delegate Josh Holstein, District 32, West Virginia House of Delegates
Delegate Kayla Young, District 56, West Virginia House of Delegates
Friends of the Cacapon River
From Below: Rising Together for Coalfield Justice
Green Shepherd, LLC
Greenbrier River Watershed Association
Kentucky Waterways Alliance
Kids For Saving Earth
Livelihoods Knowledge Exchange Network (LiKEN)
Mid-Ohio Valley Climate Action
Mountain Lakes Preservation Alliance
Mountain Water Watch
NAACP of Charleston WV
NAACP Raleigh County
National Parks Conservation Association
New River Conservancy
Plateau Action Network
Potomac Valley Audubon Society
Protect Middleway
Ranson Community Gardens
ReImagine Appalachia
Save Our Soil
Senator Mike Oliverio, District 13, West Virginia State Senate
Senator Mike Woelfel, District 5, West Virginia Senate and Senate Minority Leader
Senator Rollan Roberts, District 9, West Virginia State Senate
Sleepy Creek Watershed Association
Smithers & Friends Community Group, Inc.
Smithers Creek Watch
Town Run Watershed Group
WestVirginiaVille
West Virginia Chapter of Sierra Club
West Virginia Citizen Actions Group
West Virginia Environmental Council
West Virginia Highlands Conservancy
West Virginia Rivers Coalition