

Op-ed Template

**Please send us a copy of what you submit & let us know if & when the publication runs your op-ed.**

**Length: ~600-750 words**

* Each publication sets its own limit and the trend is toward shorter pieces
* The template includes a number of themes; you should pick themes that will resonate with your public at the local or regional level; if there have been recent stories on an issue, reference that story.

**Example Titles (the editor may change the title)**

* Water Infrastructure: The Needs Are Great, the Benefits Even Greater
* Water Infrastructure: The Sleeping Giant
* Water Infrastructure: Trying to Raise the Grade
* Water: The Quintessential Bipartisan Issue
* The Future of Clean Water is in Our Hands
* Need Funding for Resilient Infrastructure

America’s water infrastructure systems are the foundation upon which our communities thrive. Water and wastewater treatment advancements over the past century are responsible for dramatic public health gains, significant water quality improvements and the economic resurgence of many great American cities that have capitalized on cleaner waterfronts. However these gains are at risk due to aging infrastructure and more complex water quality challenges that are placing enormous burdens on municipal budgets. The 2013 American Society of Civil Engineers’ (ASCE) Report Card for America’s Infrastructure graded our water and wastewater infrastructure a D. And while the need to invest in highways and bridges often dominates media coverage, the vast network of our nation’s drinking and wastewater infrastructure supplying us with 24/7 service is lurking just under the surface and the ramifications of its failures are enormous. Simply put: no water = no business.

A huge gap exists between our current rate of investment in water and wastewater infrastructure and the real need that exists. According to EPA, this gap exceeds $650 billion over the next twenty years. According to a recent survey by the National Association of Clean Water Agencies, wastewater utilities plan rate increases at double the rate of inflation over the next decade. [HERE IN XXX CITY, WE EXPECT RATES TO INCREASE BY XXX OVER THE NEXT ### YEARS]

Much of this spending is driven by regulatory requirements and years of disinvestment in this underground infrastructure that is reaching the end of its life. Maintenance backlogs have become inevitable leading to a larger number of water main breaks and further disruptions in our daily lives. [HERE IN XXX CITY, WE ARE FACING $$$ IN ORDER TO MEET XYZ REGULATION AND ENSURE OUR PIPES AND TREATMENT PLANTS ARE MAINTAINED]

In addition to our current regulatory and maintenance challenges, our water and wastewater utilities must plan for population growth and new “normal” precipitation patterns. In order for [CITY NAME], our local economy and our tax-base to continue growing, our capacity to meet our water treatment needs must grow with them. Further, many communities, ours included, are experiencing changes in precipitation frequency and intensity, such as the severe drought in the west and the extreme storms in the east, which are posing significant new challenges for our water and wastewater infrastructure, And these challenges are only expected to worsen .

During the week of April 12th, national and state water associations and local water utilities will gather with policymakers in Washington, DC, to celebrate WaterWeek 2015 and call for a renewal of the federal partnership to help our communities meet our clean water infrastructure challenges. Forty years ago Congress enacted the Clean Water Act and undertook the challenge of cleaning our surface waters.

In the years following passage of the Clean Water Act, the federal contribution toward total capital expenditures in water and wastewater treatment infrastructure was as high as 65 percent.  Today the federal government’s contribution to the overall capital investment pie is approximately 5 percent.

The Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) program provides low-cost financing for investments in clean water infrastructure and, along with tax-exempt municipal bonds is a core federal financing program for clean water investments. Congress also recently established a new financing program as a supplement to the CWSRF and municipal bonds referred to as the Water Infrastructure Financing Act or WIFIA, but did not appropriate any funding for it. Fully funding the CWSRF and WIFIA and ensuring that investments in municipal bonds remain fully tax-exempt are essential ingredients in ensuring a Federal partnership with local communities remains a cornerstone of the Clean Water Act’s goals.

Congress must understand that local governments can no longer afford to go it alone – and that the federal partnership must be renewed by ensuring our communities have the funding and resources they need to meet today’s clean water challenges.

[Name]

[Organization]