



Statement on Passage of Drinking Water Accountability Act

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Sound Management, Transparency Key to Ensuring Reliable, Reasonably Priced Drinking Water

New Jersey Future applauds the efforts of all those involved in the July 21 passage of the Water Quality Accountability Act (S2834/A4569). Among the law's key provisions, it will require drinking-water utilities to develop comprehensive plans for managing their infrastructure, and to dedicate sufficient funds for the highest-priority improvement projects identified in those plans.

"This law is an important step in the process of upgrading New Jersey's aging, inadequate water infrastructure," said New Jersey Future Executive Director Peter Kasabach. "It will help ensure that residents and businesses alike have reliable access to drinking water at a reasonable cost.

"Too many of our utility companies have avoided the rate increases necessary to support cost-effective long-term maintenance and investment, and as a result have been forced to focus their resources on more costly emergency repairs," Kasabach continued. "A good asset management plan is the first step toward realigning spending priorities and bringing down the long-term costs of running our water systems."

The legislation requires utilities to provide the state Department of Environmental Protection and, the Board of Public Utilities or Department of Community Affairs, a report on its asset management plan, identifying improvements to be undertaken in the coming year along with their associated costs, and listing improvements made in the year immediately past, along with those associated costs.

New Jersey Future has [urged the administration](#) to enhance transparency and accountability: It has recommended that the NJDEP, as part of its rulemaking process, define simple, standardized metrics of water system condition to be included in utilities' asset management plans, and that the status of asset management plan submissions, the key metrics of system condition, and a summary of improvements planned and made, including their costs, be made publicly available.

“The transparency and accountability recommendations, if implemented, will ensure that municipal officials and ratepayers will be able to understand clearly the condition of the systems that provide their drinking water, the steps being taken to keep those systems in good working order, how their ratepayer dollars are being used to maintain those systems, and the metrics being used to evaluate progress,” explained New Jersey Future Managing Director Chris Sturm.

The legislation addresses one of the key goals of [Jersey Water Works](#), a 300-plus-member collaborative that promotes water infrastructure upgrades. The collaborative has prioritized the use of asset management programs as key to achieving sustainable, cost-effective water services.