

## Opposition to the Clean Water SRF Parity Act (H.R. 250)

The Honorable Sam Graves  
Chair, Committee on Transportation and  
Infrastructure  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rick Larsen  
Ranking Member, Committee on  
Transportation and Infrastructure  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

September 28, 2023

Dear Chair Graves, Ranking Member Larsen, and other honorable members of the  
Transportation and Infrastructure Committee,

On behalf of our millions of members and supporters, we, the undersigned 146 organizations, strongly oppose the Clean Water SRF Parity Act (H.R. 250), which would allow for-profit corporations to access the Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) and take federal funding away from local government wastewater systems. This legislation would allow large for-profit corporations to access the \$12.7 billion in funding to the CWSRF from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and funding from any future increases to the program.

**The Clean Water SRF Parity Act would take money away from local government wastewater providers to hand out to big water corporations.** For-profit water corporations, the largest of which have annual revenues that dwarf federal funding to the Clean Water SRF, can outcompete local governments, particularly small and disadvantaged communities, for the limited funds. The needs of our publicly owned wastewater systems are substantial and growing every year because of aging infrastructure, increasingly severe wet weather events and rising sea levels that overwhelm systems, and stronger water quality regulations that are necessary to protect public and environmental health. Local publicly owned treatment systems should not have to compete with large corporations for access to limited federal dollars.

**The Clean Water SRF Parity Act would facilitate wastewater privatization, which leads to higher wastewater bills for households and local businesses.** An estimated 98 percent of wastewater treatment systems serving communities are publicly owned, but in recent years, large investor-owned utilities have shifted their focus to target municipal wastewater systems for acquisition. This legislation would grease the wheels on those privatizations by taking money away from local governments and in effect starving them of resources, and because money is fungible, it would free up other capital for corporations to privatize municipal systems. It also explicitly allows funding for nonprofit entities to assist with the acquisitions of these corporations. Privatization leads to higher rates for households and local businesses to cover the cost of corporate profits. A 2022 study found that private ownership is the single biggest factor in higher drinking water rates among large systems, playing a larger role than aging infrastructure or drought.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Zhang, X. et al. "Water pricing and affordability in the US: public vs. private ownership." *Water Policy*, Vol. 24, Iss. 3. March 2022. Available at <https://iwaponline.com/wp/article/24/3/500/87702/Water-pricing-and-affordability-in-the-US-public>

**The Clean Water SRF Parity Act fails to ensure that all federal dollars would go to the public benefit.** The legislation includes a weak limitation that says the assistance would only need to “primarily” benefit customers — not exclusively — and it lacks any mechanism to ensure compliance. This is a big concern because of how investor-owned utilities are regulated in some states. In addition, because large investor-owned utilities typically seek to charge the same rates to customers statewide, the savings of federal funding for a project in a disadvantaged community will not be reflected in the sewer bills of that community. Instead, the benefits will be spread statewide including wealthy areas.

**The Clean Water SRF Parity Act is unnecessary, and it will lead to fewer new projects and fewer new jobs.** Federal funding to support publicly owned systems enables those projects to happen. Without this federal funding, many local public providers, particularly small and disadvantaged communities, cannot move forward on a project because their customer base cannot support the rate increases to finance a project. Investor-owned utilities, however, do not need Clean Water SRF financing; by their own sales pitches, large investor-owned utilities already have access to private capital, so projects proceed regardless of their access to this program. Worse, to the extent these corporations outcompete public providers for this federal funding, this legislation will lead to fewer projects and fewer associated new jobs because those locally controlled public wastewater projects no longer receive the financial support they need.

We strongly urge you to reject the Clean Water SRF Parity Act (H.R. 250). Do not allow large investor-owned utilities to access the limited funding from the Clean Water SRF program.

Sincerely,

350 Lake Norman

350Hawaii

ABQ Indivisible

Accelerate Neighborhood Climate Action

AFSCME California Chapter 57 Retirees

American Federation of State, County, and  
Municipal Employees (AFSCME)

Aquamarine Studio

Bailey's Cafe

Blessed Tomorrow

Businesses for a Livable Climate

Cahaba River Society

Call to Action Colorado

CatholicNetwork US

Center for Biological Diversity

Christians For The Mountains

Church Women United in New York State

Church World Service

Cities of Peace Detroit

Closing the Water Gap Working Group

Colorado Businesses for a Livable Climate

Common Ground Relief

Community for Sustainable Energy

Community Water Justice

Conshohocken Opposes Privatization  
Efforts

Corporate Accountability

CURE

Democrat Environmental Caucus of Florida-  
Okaloosa County Chapter

Dominican Sisters of Sparkill

Don't Waste Arizona

Dr. F Taylor, Faculty Senate Chair,  
Benedictine University

Earth Ethics, Inc.

ecoAmerica

Edna Griffin School for Social Justice

Exeter Township Pa Water Issues

Faith in Place Action Fund

Flint Rising

Food & Water Watch

For Love of Water (FLOW)

Freshwater Future

Friends of Buckingham

George Wiley Center

Georgia Advancing Communities Together,  
Inc.

Georgia Interfaith Power and Light

Great Old Broads for Wilderness

Greater Highland Area Concerned Citizens

Greater New Orleans Housing Alliance

Green House Connection Center

Greenvest

Habitat for All

Harford County Climate Action

Harrington Investments, Inc.

In the Public Interest

Indivisible Ambassadors

Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy

Interfaith Oceans

Interstate 70 Citizens Advisory Group

Justice Ministries Committee, Presbytery of  
NYC

Kairos Center for Religions, Rights and  
Social Justice

Keep Water Affordable

Kickapoo Peace Circle

Lady Freethinker

Larimer Alliance for Health, Safety, &  
Environment

Littleton Business Alliance

Long Beach Gray Panthers

Mayfair Park Neighborhood Association  
Board

Mendocino Women's Political Coalition

Mental Health & Inclusion Ministries

Metro N.Y. Catholic Climate Movement

Michigan Citizens for Water Conservation

Milwaukee Riverkeeper

Mind's Eye Productions

MLK Coalition of Greater Los Angeles

Montbello Neighborhood Improvement  
Association

Mothers Out Front - National

Mothers Out Front- Virginia

Mountain Watershed Association

MoveOn.org Hoboken RESIST

National Religious Coalition on Creation  
Care

Neighbors Opposing Privatization Efforts

NewYork Grassroots Alliance

North American Climate, Conservation and  
Environment(NACCE)

North Range Concerned Citizens

NouVo Studio

NYC H2O

Occupy Bergen County  
Orange RAPP  
Our Sacred Earth  
Partnership for the Public Good  
People Demanding Action  
People for a Healthy Environment  
Physicians for Social Responsibility, AZ  
Chapter  
PODER  
Presentation Sisters  
Protect Our Commonwealth  
Public Justice Center  
RapidShift Network  
Responsible Decarbonization Alliance  
(RDA)  
Revisionist Party  
San Luis Valley Ecosystem Council  
Sanford-Oquaga areas Concerned Citizens  
(S-OACC)  
Save the Environmental Protection Agency  
Saving Our Sons Sisters International AKA  
SOSSI  
SEE (Social Eco Education)  
Seneca Lake Guardian  
Sequoia ForestKeeper  
SERCAP, INC.  
Servicios Ecumenicos para Reconciliacion y  
Reconstruccion  
Sisters of Charity  
Sisters of Charity of Nazareth  
Congregational Leadership  
Sisters of Charity of Nazareth Western  
Province Leadership  
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas Justice  
Team

Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, LA  
Sisters of St.Dominic of Blauvelt, New York  
SLO CLEAN WATER  
Small Business Alliance  
South Georgia Alliance 85  
Southwest Organization for Sustainability  
Spirit of the Sun  
Stop the Algonquin Pipeline Expansion  
Straits Area Concerned Citizens for Peace  
Justice and Environment  
System Change Not Climate Change  
Taproot Earth  
Terra Advocati  
The Cornucopia Institute  
The Story of Stuff Project  
The Water Collaborative of Greater New  
Orleans  
Title Track  
Topanga Peace Alliance  
Truthseekers - Health Justice  
Unite North Metro Denver  
United Church of Christ, Detroit  
Metropolitan Association Social Justice  
Team  
United Native Americans  
UpRiver  
Vote Climate  
Wall of Women  
Water You Fighting For  
Waterkeeper Alliance  
Waterspirit  
We the People of Detroit  
WESPAC Foundation, Inc.

West End Revitalization Association  
(WERA)

Western Slope Businesses for a Livable  
Climate

WildEarth Guardians

Wisdom Institute

Womxn from the Mountain

Working for Racial Equity