

ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH CONGRESS  
**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE  
2125 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6115

Majority (202) 225-2927  
Minority (202) 225-3641

January 26, 2011

The Honorable Fred Upton  
Chairman  
Committee on Energy and Commerce  
2125 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Upton:

We are writing to urge you to continue the Committee's bipartisan work from last year to craft legislation that will help meet the drinking water needs of the American people.

Yesterday, a 54-inch water main burst in Prince George's County, Maryland, flooding a major interstate highway with three feet of water. School openings were delayed, government offices closed, and a church building destroyed. The water supply of approximately 400,000 local residents was compromised, leading to a boil water advisory. The pipe that burst was 40 years old.

Unfortunately, this is not the first dangerous water main break, and it will not be the last. Last year, our Committee heard testimony that most water utilities' infrastructure is between 75 and 110 years old. In many cases, our existing infrastructure is at or beyond the limits of its useful life. According to the American Water Works Association, cast iron pipes dating to the late 1800s have an average life expectancy of about 120 years. Because of changing materials and manufacturing techniques, pipes laid in the 1920s have an average life expectancy of about 100 years, and pipes laid in the post-World War II boom can be expected to last about 75 years. That means that we are looking at the looming failure of a large portion of our water infrastructure.

EPA's GAP Assessment, performed in 2002, predicted that by 2020, 44% of our drinking water pipe network will be classified as either "poor," "very poor," or, disturbingly, "life elapsed." In 2009, the American Society of Civil Engineers gave our nation's drinking water infrastructure a grade of "D-."

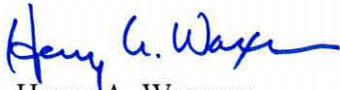
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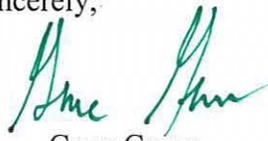
Addressing this grave public health threat requires a bipartisan effort. According to the American Water Works Association, the costs to replace aging pipes could reach \$10,000 per household. Such costs would prove to be exceptionally challenging for all but our most affluent communities.

It is for that reason that the Committee on Energy and Commerce passed the Assistance, Quality, and Affordability Act (AQUA) of 2010 with a bipartisan, near unanimous vote. That legislation would have reauthorized the drinking water State Revolving Fund (SRF) to replace failing infrastructure, increase compliance with the Safe Drinking Water Act requirements nationwide, protect human health, assist disadvantaged communities, and ensure the provision of safe and affordable drinking water for years to come.

We urge you to continue the Committee's bipartisan efforts to confront this public health challenge and reauthorize the drinking water SRF. We stand ready to work with you on this important initiative.

Sincerely,

  
Henry A. Waxman  
Ranking Member

  
Gene Green  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Environment  
and the Economy

cc: The Honorable John Shimkus  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Environment  
and the Economy