



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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Senate Republicans To Recommend Nearly \$8 Billion To Protect And Enhance Water Quality Statewide

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Senate Republicans unveiled a key part of their 2017-18 state budget proposal to ensure all New Yorkers have access to clean, safe drinking water by addressing extensive water quality issues and infrastructure needs. A record commitment of nearly \$8 billion - highlighted by a new \$5 billion Clean Water Bond Act and the creation of a new Drinking Water Quality Institute - would drastically improve drinking water safety and water infrastructure so that public health is protected.

Senate Majority Leader John Flanagan (2nd Senate District) said, "Communities throughout the state are struggling with the growing problems of contaminated water supplies, major infrastructure failures, and other threats that jeopardize public health and constrains the economy. The Senate's budget plan takes bold and necessary steps towards providing the resources our state desperately needs to ensure the long-term safety of our drinking water and wastewater infrastructure."

Senator Catharine Young (57th Senate District), Chair of the Senate Finance Committee, said, "Having safe and reliable water is crucial to people's lives. New York has countless aging and failing water systems, and our communities struggle with infrastructure problems that oftentimes local taxpayers cannot afford to fix. These situations have a terrible impact on our quality of life, schools, and economy. Water contaminants, including lead and cancer-causing agents, have been found in too many instances, causing illnesses and heartache. Towns and villages across our state need modern water and sewer systems, and the Senate's plan to tackle this essential issue will help achieve the best results in a fiscally-responsible way."

Senator Kemp Hannon (6th Senate District), Chair of the Senate Health Committee, said, “The Senate’s budget proposal incorporates the important lessons we have learned from intense study of the many water quality challenges facing our state. We believe more funding is essential - increasing the state's financial commitment with a Bond Act to upgrade deficient infrastructure, while also ensuring that sound, scientific expertise is provided by the Drinking Water Quality Institute will protect the public from existing and emerging contaminants.”

Senator Tom O’Mara (58th Senate District), Chair of the Senate Environmental Conservation Committee, said, “We know that the many challenges surrounding water quality are here to stay. Consequently, these Senate recommendations are clearly among the top priorities in 2017. These proposed actions focus on helping localities undertake vital and long-overdue water infrastructure projects, including sewer and municipal water line repairs, and fully recognize that drinking water quality concerns and crises regionally, statewide, and across the nation have become increasingly acute. It’s a timely, commonsense budget strategy that makes great environmental, fiscal and economic sense.”

Two of the Senate Republicans’ central budget water quality proposals – the \$5 billion Bond Act and new Drinking Water Quality Institute – were among the recommendations of a report prepared by the Senate’s Health and Environmental Conservation committees earlier this year. The report was developed from input provided at hearings held by the committees last summer and fall where government officials, experts, and residents provided the Senate and Assembly with a comprehensive understanding of the widespread water quality issues facing communities. Reports estimate that approximately \$80 billion over 20 years would be required to adequately upgrade the state’s water infrastructure.

Creation of a New \$5 Billion Clean Water Bond Act

To help begin making real progress in addressing the state’s ongoing infrastructure crisis, the Senate is proposing a new \$5 billion Clean Water Bond Act. The Bond Act would provide critical funds for many different types of projects to prevent contamination that endangers public health and safety, clean up pollution, protect water sources, and promote the growth of the economy through infrastructure investment.

Support for the Proposed \$2 Billion for Clean Water Infrastructure

The proposal of a \$5 Billion Bond Act is in addition to the Senate's support of \$2 billion allocated in the Executive Budget. The Senate's plan for \$2 billion in clean water infrastructure funds would create the Water Quality Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2017 to help immediately begin funding necessary improvements that meet the varying needs of communities throughout the state. Once the \$5 billion Bond Act is approved by voters, it would be added to what remains of the \$2 billion to ensure more infrastructure needs are met under a quicker timeframe than proposed by the Governor.

Establishment of a New Drinking Water Quality Institute

A new Drinking Water Quality Institute is proposed by the Senate to address emerging contaminants affecting water supplies. The Institute would be made up of public health experts, scientists, water purveyors, and the commissioners of the state Departments of Health and Environmental Conservation. They would be charged with setting New York-specific standards for unregulated contaminants that are at least as stringent as federal health advisories; developing a list of contaminants for which testing is required by public water suppliers; and establishing a clear notification process for municipalities, state agencies, and the public. New York must do all it can to err on the side of caution when it comes to contaminants in our drinking water.

Creation of the Emerging Contamination Monitoring Act

To help better protect public health and establish safety thresholds for drinking water contaminants, the Senate proposal establishes the Emerging Contamination Monitoring Act. This measure would help clear up potential confusion about unregulated contaminants by requiring the state Department of Health to adopt any contaminant threshold level recommended by the Drinking Water Quality Institute or, where no such recommendation exists, the federal threshold.

Support for \$300 Million Environmental Protection Funding

The Senate's budget proposal continues the state's record commitment to the protection of natural resources by concurring with the \$300 million proposed in the Executive Budget for the Environmental Protection Fund. This program helps protect water resources through the preservation of open spaces and upgrading sewage treatment plants, among many other environmental initiatives.

Continued Funding for the Water Quality Infrastructure Investment Program

For the past two years, Senate Republicans succeeded in securing additional funding above the Executive Budget proposal for critical water and environmental infrastructure improvements in the final budget. This year's Senate proposal supports the continuation of \$175 million for 2017-2018 to provide municipal grants -- the last of a \$400-million three-year commitment -- for the replacement and repair of existing wastewater infrastructure and drinking water infrastructure.

Continued Funding for Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds

The Senate's budget proposal continues support for state-administered programs that continue providing low-cost financing and grants for the construction of water system projects and drinking water improvements in disadvantaged communities. A total of \$205 million would be provided for the Clean Water State Revolving Fund, and \$70 million for the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund.

The Senate's one-house budget will be advanced and approved the week of March 13, followed by the start of open, public conference committees to iron out differences that exist between the Senate and Assembly plans.

A new state budget is scheduled to take effect on April 1.