



**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden  
President of the United States  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden,

We write to express support for your commitment to water rights by *“ensuring clean, safe drinking water is a right in all communities,”* as indicated in your **Build Back Better infrastructure plan**. We want to thank you for your commitment to water rights for all, and for your attention to the needs of our most vulnerable communities. To that end, we urge you to include the provisions of H.R. 616 - the Emergency Water is a Human Right Act, in your upcoming infrastructure package. This bill - which has bicameral support, is cosponsored by 82 Members of U.S. House Representatives and is endorsed by over six dozen organizations - provides a comprehensive legislative roadmap to address America’s water crisis in the midst of this pandemic.

Water rights advocates – many of whom represent communities across this country who are on the frontlines of America’s water crisis – were excited to see that you made access to clean, safe drinking water a priority in your plan to **Build Back Better**, including a pledge to *“ensure all communities have access to safe drinking water and wastewater infrastructure.”* Ensuring water as a human right for all Americans means addressing both the physical water infrastructure crisis and the water affordability crisis that are plaguing our country.

The United States is facing a massive crisis around water access and infrastructure. In 2016, a nationwide assessment of water shutoffs for non-payment revealed that an estimated 15 million people in the United States experienced a water shutoff, a shocking 1 out of every 20 households. Moreover, water shutoffs disproportionately impact cities with higher rates of poverty and unemployment, and larger populations of people of color. The City of Detroit, for example, shut off water to more than 112,000 households between 2014 and 2018. At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic the City of Detroit estimated that there were about 2,800 occupied households with no water service. Sadly, this issue spans well beyond Detroit and across the United States - the highest shutoffs rates in the United States are concentrated in southern and rural states such as Louisiana, Arkansas, Florida, and Oklahoma. In addition to being a human rights issue, this could seriously impact efforts to contain the spread of COVID-19, as it impedes people’s ability

to follow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines around proper hygiene and hand washing.

For the above reasons, we urge you to include provisions from H.R. 616, the Emergency Water is a Human Right Act, in your upcoming infrastructure package. This bill would:

- Prohibit service providers from disconnecting or interrupting a household's water services during the COVID-19 public health emergency.
- Ensure robust water affordability protections for households with incomes up to 150% of the federal poverty guidelines by authorizing \$1.5 billion in grants to assist low-income households that pay a high proportion of household income for drinking water and wastewater services.

In addition, many of our communities across the nation are still struggling to fully remove and replace lead piping present throughout their water infrastructure. It is essential that the infrastructure plan also provide monies to communities to improve our deteriorated water infrastructure and were encouraged to read in your Build Back Better plan the need to replace lead service pipes. We also urge you to include monies to communities across the country in your next infrastructure package to ensure that in the coming years, no person in the United States must be concerned that the water they drink may have been contaminated by lead.

No person living in this country, whether Democrat or Republican, should be forced to survive without access to safe and clean water, let alone during a global pandemic. It is essential that any final agreement on an infrastructure package include robust funding to tackle America's water affordability crisis, money to upgrade and replace dangerous outdated water infrastructure, and a water shutoff prohibition for the duration of the pandemic to help keep all of us safe from this deadly virus. We believe that the Biden Administration can be the administration that finally makes the dream of clean, safe, affordable drinking water a reality for every American.

We thank you for your continued attention to this life or death issue, and look forward to working closely with you and your team in the coming years to deliver on our promise to Build Back Better.

Sincerely,



RASHIDA TLAIB  
Member of Congress



DEBBIE DINGELL  
Member of Congress

NANETTE DIAZ BARRAGÁN  
Member of Congress

PRAMILA JAYAPAL  
Member of Congress

EARL BLUMENAUER  
Member of Congress

MONDAIRE JONES  
Member of Congress

SUZANNE BONAMICI  
Member of Congress

RO KHANNA  
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CORI BUSH  
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BARBARA LEE  
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