



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 5, 2023

PRC Commissioners ask Congress to fund programs aimed at expanding safe, affordable drinking water and wastewater treatment services

SANTA FE — The New Mexico Public Regulation Commission (PRC) today asked members of the state's congressional delegation to support two federal programs aimed at making safe, dependable, and affordable drinking water and wastewater treatment services available to more American households and benefitting thousands of New Mexicans.

All three PRC Commissioners sent a letter to each member of New Mexico's congressional delegation, asking them to continue funding the Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP) for Fiscal Year 24. Originally introduced during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, this federal initiative provides financial assistance to low-income households to help pay water and wastewater bills. Without congressional approval for continued funding, the program will end on June 30, 2023.

Since its inception in 2021, LIHWAP has assisted more than 430,000 households across the country. In Fiscal Year 2021, New Mexico households received \$9 million in funding from LIHWAP, representing over 6,000 customer accounts at a maximum benefit of \$1,500 each, providing financial assistance to those who need it the most.

"Access to clean and safe drinking water is essential for every person's daily living, sanitation, and ability to function in the economy. The lack of running water can render a home uninhabitable," Commissioners wrote in their letter in support of continued funding for LIHWAP. "Whatever one's view of the program, now – while high inflation and rising interest rates persist – is not the time to let the program lapse. New Mexicans need access to this basic necessity."

In a separate letter, Commissioners asked the state's three members of the U.S. House of Representatives to co-sponsor and proactively support the Clean Water State Revolving Fund Parity Act (H.R. 250). This legislation expands the state revolving fund, established under the Clean Water Act, by dispersing low-interest loans to privately-owned treatment works to subsidize wastewater projects. Currently, these loans are only available to public wastewater systems.

The Clean Water SRF program provides the financial support utilities need to balance adequate investments in infrastructure with affordable rates by providing low-interest loans and grants to wastewater service providers. Under the current program structure, state officials administering the SRF programs can only provide low-interest loans and grants to public wastewater systems. H.R. 250 amends eligibility provisions so that all wastewater customers will have the ability to benefit from the program's low-interest loans.

In New Mexico, the PRC regulates 24 private water utilities and eight wastewater utilities, five of which provide

both services. Achieving SRF parity could potentially benefit about 6,000 New Mexican customer accounts, the majority of which are residential accounts.

“Providing access to the clean water SRF will benefit customers of private wastewater systems in the same way as it benefits customers of public systems given that private water utilities are required by state regulators, such as public utility commissions, to pass any savings directly on to their customers,” Commissioners wrote in their letter supporting the passage of H.R. 250.

Copies of the Commissioners' letters are available upon request.

An online version of this release is available [here](#).

###

*The **New Mexico Public Regulation Commission (NMPRC)** regulates the [utilities](#), [telecommunications](#), and [motor carrier](#) industries to ensure fair and reasonable rates, and to assure reasonable and adequate services to the public as provided by law. The NMPRC also promotes public safety through the [Pipeline Safety Bureau](#) and [Transportation Division](#).*