

**Opening Statement for Rep. Earl L. “Buddy” Carter
Subcommittee on Environment and Climate Change
Hearing on “Trusting the Tap: Upgrading America's Drinking
Water Infrastructure.”
March 9, 2022**

Good morning. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Welcome to all our witnesses.

OUT OF CONTROL SPENDING

From Day 1, I urged for there to be transparency on the massive amounts of money this Congress has been providing to the Executive Branch.

Record government spending is fueling inflation.

From the gas pump to the grocery store, it's making it harder for people to pay for basic expenses to get by.

We just learned that funds from the Democrats' quote “American Rescue Plan,” have been spent on things like a hotel, a ballpark, and ski slopes.

This is the kind of waste we warned about when Democrats acted alone to spend \$2 trillion.

Where's the accountability we've been asking for?

Whether it is over this \$2 trillion in inflationary spending or over the Senate Infrastructure law, there must be proper oversight over how we spend people's hard earned taxpayer dollars.

American families who are struggling to afford gas, cars, food, new clothes, and heating their homes... deserve certainty that their duly-elected representatives are leading to ensure funds aren't wasted or abused.

We should all be asking if the federal government wants to spend more money, can the American people afford it?

MOST IMPORTANT WITNESS IS MISSING

Today, is an important opportunity for this subcommittee to review and conduct oversight over the Safe Drinking Water Act provisions in the Senate Infrastructure Law and I appreciate the Chairman scheduling it.

That being said, we are missing an important witness. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

The EPA is responsible for implementing the law we are discussing today.

I hope, Mr. Chairman, that you will work with us to invite EPA to

testify about its implementation of the \$35 billion in funding for safe drinking water programs.

CONCERNS WITH DRINKING WATER PROVISIONS IN IJA

So, let me be clear: my stated concerns with the drinking water provisions in the Senate Infrastructure law are about transparency and accountability.

Without question, I want our communities to have safe drinking water.

Making that water safe costs money.

Some communities, because it requires a monetary investment, need help from the Federal government.

But simply throwing money at drinking water challenges, using a federal, one-size-fits-all approach, is no way to solve the problems many communities face.

My concerns start with the large amounts of spending, but also include whether EPA is using this bill as an excuse to overtake drinking water program management, spending flexibility, and utility operations.

These are all areas that traditionally fall to local governments and the states. A federal takeover would be unprecedented and

troubling.

My concerns with the safe drinking water provisions in the Senate Infrastructure law go further.

First, what are the impacts of the law's mandates on required spending?

Promoting purchasing power for communities should be our highest aim. If we swallow up this goal with requirements that strain the ability to complete necessary projects, we do both taxpayers and those serving communities a disservice.

Second, how will this additional new funding and EPA's guidance affect existing State drinking water revolving funds? And will any of the changes relate only to the Senate Infrastructure funding or will they have long-term impacts to project prioritization or the State Revolving Fund?

Third, will this law improve cybersecurity at drinking water plants or does it just increase the burdens on utilities and strain their resources?

Fourth, there are questions about the lead service line replacement provisions. For example, do EPA and the states know where the lead service lines are, and will the agency ensure that millionaires do not benefit under this program?

Finally, there are concerns about rural communities' role in this funding. Will rural communities have access to funding and technical assistance, or could they fall just outside of the definition of disadvantaged communities?

The Senate Infrastructure Law has both substantial authorizing and appropriations provisions, so we have a lot to cover today.

Again, I hope in a future hearing the EPA is here to formally answer questions about its use of \$35 billion in additional funding.

This is important to ensure accountability and understand any changes that may be needed in the law.

Thank you, I look forward to our conversation today.