

Opening Statement for Chairman Brett Guthrie

Subcommittee on Environment

Committee on Energy & Commerce

Hearing: “From Source to Tap: A Hearing to Examine Challenges and Opportunities for Safe, Reliable, and Affordable Drinking Water.”

February 24, 2026

Thank you, Chairman Palmer, for convening this important hearing on drinking water.

The Safe Drinking Water Act was first enacted in 1974, and Congress has amended it multiple times to modernize the federal framework for ensuring that the tap water that reaches our homes is safe.

Under this framework, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has several roles, including helping finance improvements to local water infrastructure, establishing standards to limit contaminants in drinking water, and protecting sources of drinking water from threats.

But EPA is not the only one involved in this process. States, local governments, drinking water utilities, and communities also have important roles to play.

There’s no question that much of our water infrastructure is old and needs to be updated, as we just saw up close with the blowout of the Potomac Interceptor sewage tunnel, which leaked millions of gallons of untreated wastewater into the Potomac River, the primary source of drinking water for the communities in and around the nation’s capital.

However, the best way to respond to these challenges is up for debate.

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act provided EPA \$50 billion for water infrastructure programs – an unprecedented level of funding and more than five times what Congress appropriates to the entire EPA in an average year.

These IIA authorities expire at the end of this fiscal year, which provides Congress this opportunity to consider what drinking water policies have been working and what may need to be changed.

Federal taxpayer money is not – and cannot be – the only solution to the infrastructure challenges our country faces. We need better policies and practices at the federal, state, and local levels so new infrastructure can be built and maintained, which also creates jobs and helps our communities thrive.

We have an excellent panel of witnesses today, including a fellow Kentuckian, Lindsey Rehtin, who is President and CEO of the Northern Kentucky Water District, the third largest water utility in the Commonwealth of Kentucky, and Nicole Murley, the EPA Deputy Inspector General, who has been conducting a lot of important oversight of how billions in taxpayer dollars are actually being used.

I look forward to hearing from all of our witnesses and engaging in a productive dialogue on the issues impacting the safety, reliability, and affordability of our nation's drinking water systems.

I yield back.