

Chairman Gary Palmer
Opening Statement—Subcommittee on Environment
“Reliable Water in the Digital Age: Examining Legislation to
Strengthen Drinking Water Systems and Protect Ratepayers.”
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As prepared for Delivery

Good morning. I want to welcome Subcommittee Ranking Member Tonko, my colleagues, and our witnesses to today’s hearing before the Subcommittee on Environment.

Today’s hearing provides a timely and important opportunity to examine legislation that would reauthorize critical drinking water programs and address the growing water infrastructure demands associated with data centers.

Congress enacted the Safe Drinking Water Act in 1974 to protect the quality of our nation’s drinking water. Since then, Congress has periodically amended the Act and reauthorized its programs to address emerging needs and challenges. Most notably, the 1996 amendments established the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund, or DWSRF, which

has become the primary source of federal investment in drinking water infrastructure.

One of the discussion drafts we will consider today – the Safe Drinking Water Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2026 – would reauthorize the DWSRF and includes a number of bipartisan priorities, including support for rural and smaller water systems, a program to provide point-of-use filters for drinking water systems at schools, and new authority to address cybersecurity risks.

We will continue to discuss these policy reforms and appropriate funding authorizations with our friends in the minority, as we also work with our colleagues across the House and in the Senate on a final water infrastructure bill.

In addition to reauthorizing these programs, we will examine legislation intended to protect ratepayers from costs associated with serving data centers. Data centers can and should have positive impacts on local communities. They are major drivers of investment, economic growth, job creation, and the development of our nation's digital

infrastructure. However, those benefits should not come at the expense of families and small businesses through higher water rates.

In my district alone, QTS has announced a \$15 billion investment in data center development, creating significant opportunities for economic growth, job creation, and digital infrastructure development across Alabama. We welcome that investment. At the same time, local families and businesses should not be forced to shoulder infrastructure costs that are directly attributable to these facilities.

Many major tech companies have also committed to reducing or replenishing their water use. Companies are investing in closed-loop systems, liquid cooling, and other technologies intended to reduce their reliance on evaporative cooling. We should recognize and encourage these innovations while continuing to ensure that communities and ratepayers are protected.

The two pieces of draft legislation on today's agenda -- the Safe Drinking Water Infrastructure Investment Act of 2026 and the Water

Cost Accountability Act -- would together support continued economic growth by strengthening our nation's drinking water infrastructure.

To assist us in these efforts, we welcome three witnesses today.

First, we have Mr. Neil Bradley, Executive Vice President, Chief Policy Officer, and Head of Strategic Advocacy at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

We are also joined by Ms. Mae Wu, founder and principal of Health and Environmental Advising.

Finally, we will hear from Ms. Julie Moore, Secretary of the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources and vice chair of the Water Committee for the Environmental Council of the States, or ECOS.

I thank each of our witnesses for appearing before the Subcommittee today, and I look forward to our discussion.