

Congressman Joe Neguse
Statement for the Record
Water, Oceans, and Wildlife Subcommittee Hearing
“Legislative hearing on H.R. 263, H.R. 3081, H.R. 5880, H.R. 6238, H.R.
7612, H.R. 7632, AND H.R. 7633”
May 12, 2022

Thank you, Chair Huffman, for the opportunity to express my support for H.R. 7632, the “Tribal Access to Clean Water Act,” a crucial piece of legislation that would address the significant underinvestment in water infrastructure projects on Tribal lands.

Section 6 of H.R. 7632 would reauthorize Reclamation’s Rural Water Supply Program through 2032 and create a new competitive grant program for tribal clean water access projects. This funding targets projects that benefit access to safe drinking water for communities and households on tribal land or address public health and safety concerns associated with access to safe drinking water. H.R. 7632 would provide \$1 billion for the new grant program and \$90 million for Reclamation’s Native Affairs Technical Assistance Program for fiscal year 2023. Additionally, the federal government could pay up to 100 percent of the cost of an eligible project.

Access to clean water is a human right. Yet almost half of Native American households do not have the same basic water and sanitation services as many Americans. Some studies indicate that Native American homes are 19 times more likely than other households to lack indoor plumbing. Furthermore, the same is true for tribal community buildings and schools. Tribal water systems also present unique challenges, such as managing high capital and operating costs in remote locations and finding and retaining water system operators. The deprivation of this basic service affecting over half a million residents of tribal communities constitutes one of the fundamental inequities of our time.

I am proud to say that H.R. 7632 is endorsed by the National Congress of American Indians, Southern Ute Indian Tribe, Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah, Ute Indian Tribe, Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, Navajo Nation, and Jicarilla Apache Nation. I look forward to continuing work on this bill and other efforts to reaffirm the Federal Government’s commitment to providing access to reliable, clean drinking water in Tribal communities. If you have questions, contact Pablo Balcazar on my staff at pablo.balcaza@mail.house.gov.

Thank you.