

**REP. CATHY MCMORRIS RODGERS OPENING STATEMENT
ENVIRONMENT & CLIMATE CHANGE SUB
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**“The CLEAN Future Act and Drinking Water: Legislation to Ensure Drinking
Water is Safe and Clean”**

As prepared for delivery

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good morning to you, to all the Members here today, and to our witness. Before I get to my remarks, I want to say thank you to you, Mr. Chairman, for including the “Drinking Water Funding for the Future Act” as part of the hearing.

Helping our communities comply with the Safe Drinking Water Act extending funding for proven programs, increasing purchasing power for drinking water systems, and bolstering technical assistance--these are the items upon which I think we all agree.

These were the pillars of a very successful, bipartisan drinking water package that became law in 2018. It can also be a formula for today. We must invest in our children’s future to win the future. But, there is a difference between investing wisely and saddling our children with crushing debt.

Last week, the Committee for a Responsible Budget stated that despite record low borrowing rates, interest payments on the Federal debt cost over \$300 billion this fiscal year. We must think about creative ways to solve these problems, not just write a bigger check.

On today’s bills, there are parts of each that sound appealing; yet, taken as a whole, they divert us to a dangerous pathway. Let me just highlight three areas.

First, the authorization amounts contained in many of these proposals. For instance, the drinking water revolving loan fund authorization is increased 400-500 percent of the last appropriation bill passed by a Democrat-led House. I support the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund, but I am concerned States cannot meet their matching requirements and I see few practical benefits with pushing a number this high.

Additionally, there's \$45 Billion for full lead service line replacements for both poor and wealthy Americans (including their privately owned pipes). This amount is being pushed even though EPA has yet to publish a "Needs Assessment" on the number of lead service lines and legislative pushes for lead line mapping.

The second area of concern is the creation of new entitlement programs to pay off unpaid invoices. I -- and many of my Republican colleagues -- supported bipartisan legislation to help affected people pay their water bills during this pandemic because they were targeted and temporary.

These bills create open ended programs that prevent future collection efforts for 5 years. Plus, one of them creates the first EVER entitlement program run by EPA. Moreover, these bills simultaneously require EPA to study the size and scope of the problem while also pushing aid funding out the door -- which seems a little backwards to me.

Lastly, there are proposals to change regulatory requirements when EPA issues drinking water and underground injection rules that I find concerning. One proposal strikes requirements

preventing EPA from issuing rules where the costs exceed the benefits and also removes variances for small systems – killing alternate, affordable means of compliance.

Water, itself, may be quote “free,” but **treated** water is not – particularly in towns like College Place, Washington, where they can’t even afford the State Revolving Fund loan. We must sustain policies that prioritize finite resources to address public health matters – including federal, state, local, or private ones. Once Congress commits those resources, they won’t be there for worse ones.

Most importantly, these changes will place water systems into a spiral of debt, chronic non-compliance, or both; essentially pushing any non-urban or suburban system into consolidation under the terms of the Safe Drinking Water Act. Additionally, Federal regulations on hydraulic fracturing and underground injection of carbon dioxide will not make water safer. It will, however, create a powerful disincentive for hydraulic fracturing and CCUS.

This will make us a less secure, more economically dependent society going forward -- whether from our government or foreign nations. And it could sideline emissions reduction technology. Mr. Chairman, I look forward to learning more about EPA career staff’s views on these bills. I wish we had other stakeholders here to weigh in on these provisions. Nevertheless, I thank you and I yield back my remaining time.