

# Affordability/Drinking Water: American Water Works Association Proposed Policy



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The American Water Works Association (“AWWA”) is considering a draft policy statement on “Affordability.”

The proposed affordability policy (“Policy”) is stated to have been approved by the organization’s Technical and Educational Council and will be considered by its Board of Directors.

The draft policy would read as follows:

The American Water Works Association (AWWA) recognizes that providing reliable and high-quality water, wastewater, reuse, and stormwater services at just, reasonable, non-prejudicial, and non-discriminatory rates and charges to all customers is fundamental to a utility's mission. To be financially sustainable, utilities optimize expenditures through operating efficiencies, implement water conservation and resource management best practices, and prudently manage capital, operating, and financing costs. However, even with sound planning and budgeting practices, some utilities are faced with affordability challenges among some of their low-income residential customers. Such affordability challenges can occur in any community, regardless of size, location, demographic makeup, and income of the customers.

AWWA strongly recommends the adoption of policies and procedures by utilities, regulators, and local and state governments to address the affordability challenges experienced by some of their residential customers. Utilities should work closely with their local, state, provincial, and national governments to ensure that applicable laws and policies do not impede utility efforts to address affordability challenges and evaluate new policies that allow disadvantaged households to have reliable access to utility services.

Low-income customer assistance can take many different forms that should be designed and implemented to meet the unique challenges of individual communities. Effective communication and education programs targeting fiscally challenged households are also important to build awareness about available assistance programs and strategies to use water more efficiently.

Implementing long-term solutions to meet affordability challenges entails applying both existing tools and modification of current local and state policies. Along with partners, effective locally appropriate solutions can deliver assistance to financially challenged households through collaboration with existing community service programs, customer assistance programs operated for other utilities (such as energy service), and community housing assistance programs.

AWWA describes itself as an international, nonprofit, scientific and educational society dedicated to providing total water solutions assuring the effective management of water.

A copy of the [draft policy](#) can be downloaded here.