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AWWA applauds doubling of WIFIA funding

March 23, 2018

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) – The American Water Works Association today commended U.S. Congress and the Trump Administration for more than doubling the funding for the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA) and bolstering the Drinking Water State Loan Fund (DWSRF) through the omnibus spending bill.

WIFIA received \$63 million – up from \$30 million in its first year of funding to make loans – and the Drinking Water SRF received \$1.16 billion, an increase of \$300 million. The federal omnibus budget bill, which keeps the U.S. government funded through the fiscal year ending Sept. 30, was approved by Congress Thursday and signed into law by President Donald Trump today.

“As the chief architect of WIFIA, AWWA, along with its 51,000 individual members and 4,000 utility members, applauds the action by Congress and the current administration to fully fund this cost-effective infrastructure funding program,” said Tracy Mehan, AWWA executive director of government affairs. “We are grateful for their support and offer our sincere thanks to both branches of the federal government. There is a compelling need to replace and expand America’s water and wastewater infrastructure, and WIFIA is crucial to success in renewing these assets.”

Administered by the U.S. Environmental Agency, WIFIA lowers the cost of large water infrastructure projects by providing low-interest, long-term federal loans to communities. The additional funding will allow EPA to solicit more letters of interest and loan applications from interested water utilities.

Modeled after the successful Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act, WIFIA leverages federal dollars so that for every dollar Congress appropriates, 50 to 60 dollars are expected to be loaned out. With the United States facing a \$2 trillion water and wastewater infrastructure challenge, many water utilities rely on low-interest loans to spur along critical water infrastructure projects.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s rural development programs also received additional funding, including more than \$4 billion for the water and wastewater loan and grant program, a \$2.3 billion increase from last year. Additionally, \$20 million has been set aside to provide for lead testing in schools and childcare facilities and \$10 million to reduce lead in drinking water.

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Established in 1881, the American Water Works Association is the largest nonprofit, scientific and educational association dedicated to managing and treating water, the world's most important resource. With approximately 50,000 members, AWWA provides solutions to improve public health, protect the environment, strengthen the economy and enhance our quality of life.

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