

## Clean Water Referendum - PA Fair Share For Clean Water Coalition: Vote Yes! For Clean Water Nov. 4

The [PA Fair Share For Clean Water Coalition](#) this week said Pennsylvania voters have the opportunity to do their fair share to help clean up Pennsylvania rivers and streams by supporting the Clean Water referendum on the November 4 general election ballot.

The referendum asks voters if they support allocating \$400 million to help communities throughout the Commonwealth fund necessary upgrades to wastewater and drinking water facilities. In many cases these upgrades are needed in order to meet federal and state clean water mandates.



### The Problem

Financial help is needed for Pennsylvania's 2,200 drinking water systems and 1,060 wastewater systems to meet federal and state environmental mandates, ensure clean drinking water, and clean up pollution discharges into our rivers and streams. If state government does not do its fair share through this Clean Water referendum and other programs to help finance these needed improvements, local ratepayers will foot the entire bill.

In some areas of Pennsylvania, such as the Susquehanna and Potomac River watersheds, there are specific mandates to reduce nutrient pollution from wastewater plants to help clean up the Chesapeake Bay. 184 plants in the Chesapeake Bay watershed are faced with these legal mandates, at a cost estimated to be over \$1 billion.

Wastewater plants in other watersheds throughout Pennsylvania may also soon be required to reduce nutrient discharges as a result of the federal Clean Water Act's "Total Maximum Daily Load" program. Some plants are already facing these regulatory burdens.

Many systems are also aging or past their service life and are in desperate need of repairs or replacement. The total cost is substantial. Maintenance, upgrades and replacement costs may reach \$20 billion across the state.

In the past, the state and federal governments have been willing partners with local ratepayers in financing water infrastructure projects, recognizing that local ratepayers should not shoulder the entire burden.

Unfortunately, despite the need to upgrade our systems, in the last six years both water and sewer funds, totaling over \$340 million, have been cut from the state budget. A similar cut of \$42 million occurred from the federal budget.

### Potential State Help

The General Assembly and Gov. Rendell have recognized this problem. In July, they passed and signed into law two bills—Senate Bill 2 (Earll, R-Erie) and Senate Bill 1341 (Musto, D-Luzerne)—which provide a total of \$1.2 billion in funding for water and wastewater facilities, flood control measures and repairs for unsafe dams in areas outside Allegheny and Philadelphia counties. Together, these bills, now Acts 63 and 64 of 2008 respectively, will reestablish this state-local partnership to clean up our water.

Under Act 63, \$800 million in assistance is already approved and is funded through the state's gaming proceeds. However, Act 64 still needs voter approval to take effect.

The November ballot will include a referendum asking voters whether they approve an additional \$400 million, available statewide, for improvements to public drinking water and wastewater systems. This funding would be used for grants and loans to be administered by the Pennsylvania Infrastructure Investment Authority, better known as PennVEST.

### Economic Benefits

In addition to clean drinking water and cleaner rivers and streams, the investment of \$400 million in public works projects will generate good-paying jobs locally and help stimulate Pennsylvania's slowing economy. It also helps to provide economic opportunities for Pennsylvania's families and businesses, who depend on sound water and sewer infrastructure to help generate desperately needed jobs and investment.

### What You Will See On the Ballot

This is the actual wording of the question to appear on the November 4 ballot—

Do you favor the incurring of indebtedness by the Commonwealth of \$400,000,000 for grants & loans to municipalities and public utilities for the cost of all labor, materials, necessary operational machinery & equipment, lands, property, rights & easements,

plans & specifications, surveys, estimates of costs & revenues, prefeasibility studies, engineering & legal services and all other expenses necessary or incident to the acquisition, construction, improvement, expansion, extension, repair or rehabilitation of all or part of drinking water system, stormwater, nonpoint source projects, nutrient credits and wastewater treatment system projects?

### **Next Steps**

The PA Fair Share for Clean Water Coalition was formed to help communities, ratepayers, and farmers get the help they need to reduce nutrient pollution from wastewater plants, encourage the installation of farm conservation practices throughout Pennsylvania, and preserve economic opportunity for Pennsylvania's families and businesses.

Without addressing both sources of pollution, Pennsylvania has no chance to meet federal and state clean water mandates.

Specifically, the Coalition supports:

- Voter approval of the \$400 million water infrastructure referendum on the November 4 ballot;
- Reforms to the state's nutrient credit trading program that will help to make it a viable alternative to provide for both environmental improvements to the Bay and sufficient future sewage capacity for new development;
- \$50 million in direct cost share aid to farmers to install conservation practices (\$35 million for Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) farm tax credits and \$15 million in cost share grants);
- \$10 million to county conservation district to expand technical assistance to farmers; and
- \$10 million to restore cuts to the Department of Agriculture budget in farm programs.

The Coalition includes over 45 farm and conservation groups, businesses, and local government entities, including Pennsylvania Farm Bureau, Pennsylvania Municipal Authorities Association, Pennsylvania Builders Association, Chesapeake Bay Foundation and the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts.

**NewsClips:** [Rendell Urges Voters To Approve \\$400 Million Water, Sewer](#)

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