

# 2002 Campaign Initiative

Keeping Massachusetts Competitive... and Investing For The Future

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## INFRASTRUCTURE POLICY BRIEF: WATER

*One in a series of policy briefs outlining the critical challenges facing Massachusetts's next governor — and ways to effectively address them.*

### Why is this important?

Investments in water and wastewater systems pay substantial dividends to public health, the environment and the economy. Throughout Massachusetts, clean water programs support water-based recreation, coastal tourism, a 20,000-job commercial fishing industry and adequate drinking water supplies.

The Massachusetts Water Resource Authority's (MWRA) alone supplies 255 million gallons of water to 2.5 million people and over 5,000 businesses. The water is transported 50 to 75 miles to Boston, from the Quabbin Reservoir, where it is locally distributed through more than a thousand miles of pipe. Completed in 1938, the Quabbin is one of the largest drinking water reservoirs in the nation.

Over the past several decades, Massachusetts has invested heavily in upgrading the state's 1,600 drinking water and wastewater systems. At the turn of this new century, however, a new long-term plan is needed along with additional capital investment to keep up with new regulations, mandates, the need for aging pipe replacement, equipment upgrading and redundancy and, to maintain security of supply, drinking water quality and clean waterways.

*A significant hurdle, however, will be the estimated \$2.7 billion funding gap for projects in Massachusetts over the next 5 years.*

### What are the challenges?

- **Federal Government:** Current federal contributions for water infrastructure projects have declined by 75% in real terms since 1980, despite increasingly stringent regulations and mandates. Legislation has been debated in the U.S. Congress that would extend the Clean Water State Revolving Fund to provide states with \$20 billion over the next five years for wastewater infrastructure, security and water quality programs. State leaders should continue to pressure Washington to expand current infrastructure loan funding and re-establish federal grants to implement high priority EPA water quality programs.
- **State and Local Governments:** Broad state priorities need to be set for projects based on costs and benefits. In addition, water rates may need to be increased to fund needed projects. Local government needs to ensure it is a full partner in infrastructure funding.

#### Policy Brief Series:

- INFRASTRUCTURE
- ENERGY
- TRANSPORTATION
- WATER
- TELECOM
- HIGHER ED/SCIENCE
- K-12 EDUCATION
- HEALTH CARE

### *What are the next governor's options?*

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*"New solutions are needed to what amounts to nearly a trillion dollars in critical water and wastewater investments over the next two decades. Not meeting the investment needs of the next 20 years risks reversing the public health, environmental, and economic gains of the last three decades."*

— Safe Water for the  
21st Century  
Water Infrastructure  
Network

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- **Increase Funding for Data and Water Quality Monitoring:** Better information gathering and data analysis can help lead to more effective environmental choices. Relatively small amounts of funds to produce good data will lead to more sound environmental decisions on where to spend limited dollars.
- **Establish Drought Mitigation Plans:** Continued population growth and sprawl are creating strains on the water supply. When combined with natural swings in rainfall, the result is moderate to severe drought, water bans, and fire danger. A comprehensive drought mitigation plan which includes leak detection and repair, water supply augmentation, public education and incentives for water conservation, water inventory monitoring, and an established Drought Contingency Plan will help to minimize the impact of cyclical reductions in precipitation and ensure that our statewide water supply is protected.
- **Invest in Water Supply and Distribution Systems to Conserve Water:** A study by the American Water Works Association has estimated pipe replacement costs in Boston alone could exceed \$694 million. But this type of investment is essential to avoiding leakage into the ground.
- **Invest to Maintain Water Quality:** Waterborne diseases are now rare in the U.S. due to stringent regulations and investments to protect the safety of public drinking water supplies. But the risk has not been completely eliminated. Center for Disease Control estimates indicate that as many as 1.3 million cases of waterborne disease occur each year nationally. In fact, Massachusetts' community water systems reported more health-based violations in 2000 than the national average. Stricter standards will undoubtedly result in the need to upgrade and better maintain existing drinking water facilities.
- **Prioritize Between CSOs and Stormwater Management:** Both combined sewer overflow (CSO) systems and stormwater runoff present environmental challenges. We need to prioritize where to spend money first. In many of the older, larger cities, CSOs in which stormwater and sewage flow into the same pipe during heavy storms cause the direct release of untreated wastewater into rivers and harbors, impacting beaches and the environment. Construction of new CSO control systems will take many years and cost hundreds of millions of dollars, but can reduce sewer releases by more than 95%.
- **Security of Water Supply a Priority:** As a result of September 11th, improved security for water facilities is a key priority. Today, security goes beyond traditional physical protection and monitoring to include infrastructure projects to assure redundancy and increase flexibility in distribution and treatment systems. This is obviously a new dimension for future capital projects that must be built into long-term planning.

*Mass Insight convened several experts in the field of water to prepare this policy brief.*

*Mass Insight's 2002 Campaign Initiative is a unique briefing series for the media and statewide candidates and later the transition teams, focusing on critical competitive issues facing the Commonwealth. The issues that are the focus of the Initiative - Controlling Costs, Infrastructure (Transportation, Water, Energy, Telecommunications), Higher Education/Science, Health Care, and K-12 Education - have all been identified by business leaders as essential to creating new jobs and maintaining a positive business environment.*