

## MAKING DRINKING WATER SAFE AND AFFORDABLE IN ILLINOIS

Illinois has funds to help make sure the water is safe and affordable, but changes are needed in how money is given out. You can help by providing comments to make sure the money goes to people who really need it.

### Why is drinking water unsafe and unaffordable?

The federal government paid to build this nation's water systems, but has significantly reduced its financial support since the 1970s. Now, as water systems get older and need expensive repairs to keep drinking water safe, the customers must pay more, making water unaffordable for many households.

Making the situation worse, many communities experience revenue loss as the population shrinks while also requiring more money to address lead pipe replacement, legacy and agricultural pollution, and worsening damage from climate change.

### ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

The Illinois funding program neglects the legacy of pollution and discriminatory policies that have concentrated most environmental hazards around low-income and communities of color.

One solution is to use the state's Environmental Justice screening tool to find which communities to prioritize for funding.



### What is the problem?

The Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) is how the state government helps communities pay for major water infrastructure projects. For example, replacing lead pipes to keep water safe for drinking is very costly.

**A community can apply to the DWSRF to receive a long-term loan or grant funding. Illinois decides which communities will receive money based on two things: 1) how they score the projects and 2) how they define disadvantaged communities.**

# TAKE ACTION FOR YOUR COMMUNITY

## WHAT IS THE SOLUTION?

The way that the state defines disadvantaged communities and scores projects determines which communities will receive funding to improve their drinking water. The public is able to weigh in on these parts of the program every year and suggest changes.

### **Illinois must remove the definition and scoring rules from law.**

Without this change, this water fund will continue to leave behind some of the communities with the most need.

### **Illinois' definition of "disadvantaged community" must:**

- Ensure communities with private water services have affordability protections
- Remove any bias towards smaller populations to be considered a "disadvantaged community"
- Use better data to identify low-income communities

### **Illinois' scoring system must:**

- Remove incentives for consolidation projects
- Protect residents' rights during these projects

If you have any questions, concerns, or want to know more, please reach out to Freshwater Future staff at [info@freshwaterfuture.org](mailto:info@freshwaterfuture.org) or call (231)348-8200.

## WHAT CAN I DO?

### **1 Take Action and Submit Comments**

Your help is needed to improve the scoring and how disadvantaged communities are defined. Every year, the annual funding plan opens for public comment in **June**. Sign up here for Freshwater Future updates and we will let you know each year when Illinois' DWSRF program is open for public comment!

### **2 Local community advocacy for needed projects**

Is your community raising water rates to cover the costs of improving local water infrastructure? Encourage your local government to apply to the DWSRF by getting involved! Freshwater Future has resources available for you to organize with.



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