

115TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 2346

To establish an innovative water infrastructure workforce development program, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JANUARY 25, 2018

Mr. BOOKER (for himself and Mrs. CAPITO) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Environment and Public Works

A BILL

To establish an innovative water infrastructure workforce development program, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. WATER INFRASTRUCTURE AND WORKFORCE**

4 **INVESTMENT.**

5 (a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds that—

6 (1) utilities and local governments invest sig-
7 nificant resources in planning, designing, con-
8 structing, operating, and maintaining water, waste-
9 water, and stormwater systems—

1 (A) to ensure a safe and reliable water
2 supply for customers; and

3 (B) to maintain public health, safety, and
4 quality;

5 (2) during the 10-year period beginning on the
6 date of enactment of this Act, 30 of the largest
7 water and wastewater utilities in the United States
8 will—

9 (A) invest \$233,000,000,000 in operating
10 and capital spending; and

11 (B) support 289,000 jobs annually;

12 (3) every \$1,000,000,000 in Federal investment
13 in water and wastewater infrastructure creates on
14 average an estimated 16,000 jobs;

15 (4) jobs in the water and wastewater sector, in-
16 cluding apprenticeship positions, can pay more than
17 3 times the minimum wage;

18 (5) the median age of water sector workers is
19 48 years old, which is 6 years older than the na-
20 tional median age of workers;

21 (6) water and wastewater utilities anticipate
22 unprecedented workforce replacement needs over the
23 10-year period described in paragraph (2) because
24 37 percent of water utility workers and 31 percent

1 of wastewater utility workers will retire during that
2 period;

3 (7) during the period described in paragraph
4 (6), workforce replacement needs in the water sector
5 will exceed the 23-percent nationwide replacement
6 need of the total workforce; and

7 (8) water infrastructure projects and perma-
8 nent water utility jobs can offer access to stable,
9 high-quality jobs with competitive wages and bene-
10 fits.

11 (b) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Con-
12 gress that—

13 (1) water and wastewater utilities provide a
14 unique opportunity for access to stable, high-quality
15 careers;

16 (2) as water and wastewater utilities make crit-
17 ical investments in infrastructure, water and waste-
18 water utilities can invest in the development of local
19 workers and local small businesses to strengthen
20 communities and ensure a strong pipeline of skilled
21 and diverse workers for today and tomorrow; and

22 (3) to further the goal of ensuring a strong
23 pipeline of skilled and diverse workers in the water
24 and wastewater utilities sector, Congress urges—

1 (A) increased collaboration among Federal,
2 State, and local governments; and

3 (B) institutions of higher education, ap-
4 prentice programs, high schools, and other com-
5 munity-based organizations to align workforce
6 training programs and community resources
7 with water and wastewater utilities to accelerate
8 career pipelines and provide access to workforce
9 opportunities.

10 (c) DEFINITION OF INTRACTABLE WATER SYS-
11 TEM.—In this section, the term “intractable water sys-
12 tem” means a community water system or a noncommu-
13 nity water system (as those terms are defined in section
14 1401 of the Safe Drinking Water Act (42 U.S.C. 300f))
15 that—

16 (1) serves fewer than 1,000 individuals; and

17 (2) the owner or operator of which—

18 (A) is unable or unwilling to provide safe
19 and adequate service to those individuals;

20 (B) has abandoned or effectively aban-
21 doned the community water system or non-
22 community water system, as applicable;

23 (C) has defaulted on a financial obligation
24 relating to the community water system or non-
25 community water system, as applicable;

1 (D) fails to maintain the facilities of the
2 community water system or noncommunity
3 water system, as applicable, in a manner so as
4 to prevent a potential public health hazard; or

5 (E) is in significant noncompliance with
6 the Safe Drinking Water Act (42 U.S.C. 300f
7 et seq.) or any regulation promulgated pursuant
8 to that Act.

9 (d) INNOVATIVE WATER INFRASTRUCTURE WORK-
10 FORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM.—

11 (1) GRANTS AUTHORIZED.—The Administrator
12 of the Environmental Protection Agency (referred to
13 in this Act as the “Administrator”) and the Sec-
14 retary of the Army (referred to in this Act as the
15 “Secretary”) shall establish a competitive grant pro-
16 gram to assist the development of innovative activi-
17 ties relating to workforce development in the water
18 utility sector.

19 (2) SELECTION OF GRANT RECIPIENTS.—In
20 awarding grants under paragraph (1), the Adminis-
21 trator or the Secretary, as applicable, shall, to the
22 maximum extent practicable, select—

23 (A) water utilities that—

24 (i) are geographically diverse;

1 (ii) address the workforce and human
2 resources needs of large and small public
3 water and wastewater utilities;

4 (iii) address the workforce and human
5 resources needs of urban and rural public
6 water and wastewater utilities;

7 (iv) advance training relating to con-
8 struction, utility operations, treatment and
9 distribution, green infrastructure, customer
10 service, maintenance, and engineering; and

11 (v)(I) have a high retiring workforce
12 rate; or

13 (II) are located in areas with a high
14 unemployment rate; or

15 (B) intractable water systems.

16 (3) USE OF FUNDS.—Grants awarded under
17 paragraph (1) may be used for activities such as—

18 (A) targeted internship, apprenticeship,
19 preapprenticeship, and post-secondary bridge
20 programs for mission-critical skilled trades, in
21 collaboration with labor organizations, commu-
22 nity colleges, and other training and education
23 institutions that provide—

24 (i) on-the-job training;

25 (ii) soft and hard skills development;

1 (iii) test preparation for skilled trade
2 apprenticeships; or

3 (iv) other support services to facilitate
4 post-secondary success;

5 (B) kindergarten through 12th grade and
6 young adult education programs that—

7 (i) educate young people about the
8 role of water and wastewater utilities in
9 the communities of the young people;

10 (ii) increase the career awareness and
11 exposure of the young people to water util-
12 ity careers through various work-based
13 learning opportunities inside and outside
14 the classroom; and

15 (iii) connect young people to post-sec-
16 ondary career pathways related to water
17 utilities;

18 (C) regional industry and workforce devel-
19 opment collaborations to identify water utility
20 employment needs, map existing career path-
21 ways, support the development of curricula, fa-
22 cilitate the sharing of resources, and coordinate
23 candidate development, staff preparedness ef-
24 forts, and activities that engage and support—

25 (i) water utilities employers;

1 (ii) educational and training institu-
2 tions;

3 (iii) local community-based organiza-
4 tions;

5 (iv) public workforce agencies; and

6 (v) other related stakeholders;

7 (D) integrated learning laboratories em-
8 bedded in high schools or other secondary edu-
9 cational institutions that provide students
10 with—

11 (i) hands-on, contextualized learning
12 opportunities;

13 (ii) dual enrollment credit for post-
14 secondary education and training pro-
15 grams; and

16 (iii) direct connection to industry em-
17 ployers; and

18 (E) leadership development, occupational
19 training, mentoring, or cross-training programs
20 that ensure that incumbent water and waste-
21 water utilities workers are prepared for higher-
22 level supervisory or management-level positions.

1 (e) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
2 are authorized to be appropriated such sums as are nec-
3 essary to carry out this Act.

○