AWWA Supports Assistance to Communities Impacted by Lead

**Action Requested:**
Pass legislation providing assistance to Flint and other communities wrestling with lead or other urgent public health challenges. We support more effective public education and notification concerning lead, such as found in H.R. 4470 and the assistance provisions contained in S. 2579.

**Background**
The lead in drinking water in Flint, Mich., has highlighted the need to focus on our nation's public health by reinvesting in much of our nation’s water infrastructure, and in some cases, on an urgent basis. Congress has begun to take steps to direct federal funding to assist the citizens of Flint and other communities. The House has passed H.R. 4470, which would strengthen public notification and education requirements in the federal Lead and Copper Rule when lead is a problem in a community. These provisions would largely dovetail with revisions to that rule that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is expected to propose next year. They stemmed from stakeholder input from the agency’s National Drinking Water Advisory Council (NDWAC), which AWWA endorsed.

In the Senate, Sens. James Inhofe of Oklahoma and Debbie Stabenow of Michigan have introduced S. 2579, which has its own public notification provisions, but adds funding to assist Flint and similar communities. This bill would do the following:

- Direct $100 million in funding to the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) that would be available to states where the President has declared a public health emergency;
- Direct $70 million in funding to the Water Infrastructure Finance Innovation Act (WIFIA), which would leverage into at least $700 million (but likely much more) in financing for water projects;
- Direct $20 million in funding for childhood health programs related to lead, including the Healthy Homes Program and the Healthy Start Program;
- Add federal and state emergency declarations to the list of circumstances under which an entity could be eligible for federal loan forgiveness;
- Establish a registry for lead exposure in the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, and to establish a federal advisory committee that will review federal programs available to those exposed to lead, as well as review current research on lead poisoning and prevention of lead poisoning.
Note that WIFIA is strictly a loan program and under S. 2579, a loan would be made available to the state of Michigan, which could then provide assistance to Flint. The state, which has a AA bond rating, would still have to repay the loan. Funding provided in this bill would be offset by reductions from the Department of Energy’s Advanced Technology Vehicle Manufacturing loan program. AWWA is encouraged that this legislation will provide direct aid to the citizens of Flint, as well as allowing assistance for communities across the country.

The costs involved in removing the risks of lead pipe from drinking water are great. A study recently published in *Journal AWWA* revealed that there about 6.1 million lead service lines in the United States. The cost of replacing them is about $3,000 to $5,000 per line.

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