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The Authoritative Resource on Safe Water<sup>SM</sup>

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## CLIMATE CHANGE LEGISLATION

**Recommendations:** Support legislation that 1) authorizes drinking water-focused climate change research and 2) supports development and implementation of climate change adaptation projects by drinking water utilities. Cap-and-trade legislation should direct some of the proceeds from greenhouse gas emissions allowance auctions to these purposes.

### Background

The consensus among climate scientists is that climate shift is occurring rapidly and that significant impacts to the environment will be felt in this century. Among the first and most critical impacts will be changes to patterns of precipitation around the world, including both prolonged periods of drought and more intense though less frequent periods of rain. In mountainous areas, snow lines are rising, more precipitation is falling as rain rather than snow, and snow pack (one of nature's means of storing water) is melting off faster and earlier in the season. These changes will affect water availability, water resource management, water quality, water capture and storage, and a host of other critical issues affecting water and wastewater utilities. Water and wastewater utilities need both predictive and adaptive tools for managing the changes they face.

In the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid and Senator Dianne Feinstein (S2910) introduced legislation to authorize climate change adaptation research for drinking water utilities; Congresswoman Diana DeGette introduced companion legislation (HR6297) in the House of Representatives. Such legislation will be re-introduced this year and we request your support for its passage.

Specific needs include:

- Federally-sponsored assessments of the vulnerability of regional water resources to climate change, including short-term, medium-term, and long-term impacts.
- A comprehensive and coordinated federally-sponsored research program to downscale global climate modeling data, identify regional water quality and quantity risks, and develop enhanced water management practices. Research should include:
  - Downscaling global model data to regional and subregional levels, and developing decision and support data sets and tools useful to regional and local water managers;
  - Climate models that address sea-level rise and its effect on coastal water supplies;
  - Development of advanced strategies and initiatives to improve water conservation and energy efficiency;
  - Strategies to successfully utilize alternative water sources, such as through reuse, recycling, and desalination;
  - Strategies to mitigate potential infrastructure impacts such as sea-level rise, soil drying, reduced snowpack, reduced aquifer recharge, and increased flooding;
  - Descriptions of impacts on groundwater supplies from carbon sequestration, including research to evaluate potential water quality consequences of carbon sequestration in various regional aquifers, soil conditions, and mineral deposits;

- Improved strategies and approaches for communicating with customers, decision-makers and other stakeholders about the implications of climate change on water supply;
- Development of effective communication approaches to gain public acceptance of alternative water supplies, of new policies and practices including conservation and demand management, and recognition and acceptance of increased costs.
- A program through which water systems can compete for funding to implement climate change adaptation measures. Necessary measures will vary from region to region, but may include projects to increase water conservation, energy efficiency initiatives that help water utilities reduce their own greenhouse gas emissions, the development of alternative water sources (through reuse, recycling, and desalination), and improvements to critical infrastructure.
- Provision of financial incentives for water utilities that voluntarily document and reduce greenhouse gas emissions related to their operations.

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