

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

June 12, 2024

The Honorable Michael Connor  
Assistant Secretary of the Army – Civil Works  
108 Army Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20310

Dear Assistant Secretary Connor:

We write to request the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) work closely with the City of Atlanta to address the urgent and chronic water infrastructure challenges that recently resulted in a series of catastrophic water main breaks that left hundreds of thousands of Atlanta residents without water services, and to immediately make federal resources available to help meet the City of Atlanta's critical water infrastructure needs.

On Friday, May 31, 2024, the City of Atlanta suffered a series of catastrophic water main breaks that left hundreds of thousands of residents, many in underserved communities, without water services and under a boil water advisory that remained in effect until June 6, 2024.<sup>1</sup> We commend all who responded to this crisis, from the repair crews who worked around the clock to restore service to affected homes and businesses to the Atlanta Fire Rescue Department for their help distributing bottled water to those under the boil water advisory.<sup>2</sup> We also appreciate your assistance to deploy Corps personnel to the scene to begin reviewing the severity and extent of the problem.<sup>3</sup>

As this situation continues to develop, we request your continued engagement with the City of Atlanta to provide technical assistance to evaluate and understand the underlying problems that led to this crisis and ultimately help develop engineering solutions to restore reliable and safe drinking water service, including through the rapid allocation of Planning Assistance to States funding.

Unfortunately, the situation in Atlanta is the latest example of the significant investments needed across the country to repair the nation's aging and corroded water infrastructure. According to the American Society of Civil Engineers, a water main break occurs in the United States every two minutes, and an estimated six billion gallons of treated water are lost every day.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Atlanta Department of Watershed Management (@ATL Watershed), *UPDATE: BOIL WATER ADVISORY LIFTED FOR ENTIRE CITY OF ATLANTA*, X.com (June 6, 2024, 8:07AM), <https://x.com/ATLWatershed/status/1798688060676166016>.

<sup>2</sup> *A.M. Water System Update for June 4, 2024*, Mayor's Office of Communications (June 4, 2024, 8:30AM), <https://www.atlantaga.gov/Home/Components/News/News/15090/672>.

<sup>3</sup> *Boil Water Advisory Lifted for Parts of Atlanta – Mayor engages U.S. Army Corps of Engineers*, Mayor's Office of Communications (June 3, 2024, 6:45AM), <https://www.atlantaga.gov/Home/Components/News/News/15086/672>.

<sup>4</sup> Matthew McGinn, *Imagine a Day Without Water*, American Society of Civil Engineers (October 21, 2021), <https://infrastructurereportcard.org/imagine-a-day-without-water>.

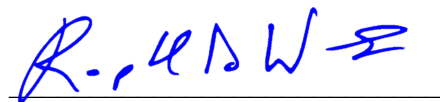
This is exactly why we championed the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (P.L. 117-58). This historic legislation provides more than \$50 billion for drinking water and clean water projects across the country, and Georgia has already received over \$570 million in water infrastructure funding, including over \$150 million to replace toxic lead pipes.<sup>5</sup> However, it is clear that we can and must do more to improve our nation's water infrastructure, including in major population centers like the City of Atlanta.

Fortunately, the Corps is the nation's leader in providing engineering solutions to tackle the nation's water resources and infrastructure challenges. That's why we fought to increase the authorization for the City of Atlanta's Environmental Infrastructure authority by \$50 million in the Water Resources Development Act of 2022.<sup>6</sup> Under this authority, the Corps can construct water infrastructure improvements for the City of Atlanta, including the replacement of aging and failing water mains like those at the heart of this latest crisis. We urge the Corps to collaborate with the City of Atlanta to understand the critical infrastructure improvements needed to identify Environmental Infrastructure opportunities.

Therefore, we request that the Corps provide the necessary funding to help the City of Atlanta complete a comprehensive review of its drinking water infrastructure as a first step towards developing solutions to improve drinking water service and infrastructure reliability. Moreover, because the water main break and subsequent boil water advisories affected several economically disadvantaged communities, we ask the Corps to waive the collection of local fees as authorized by Section 8119 of the Water Resources Development Act of 2022.<sup>7</sup>

Thank you for your ongoing work to assist the City of Atlanta and its residents as they work to resume normal operations following the recent water main breaks. We appreciate your continued cooperation on this matter and look forward to making significant improvements to Atlanta's water infrastructure.

Sincerely,



Reverend Raphael Warnock  
United States Senator



Jon Ossoff  
United States Senator



Nikema Williams  
Member of Congress

<sup>5</sup> *Investing in America – Georgia*, White House, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Georgia-IIA-State-Fact-Sheet.pdf>; Bruno Pigott, *Fiscal Year 2024 Lead Service Line Allotments for the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund Provisions of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Funding*, Environmental Protection Agency Office of Water (May 1, 2024), [https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2024-05/fy24-bil-lslr-allotments-memorandum\\_may-2024.pdf](https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2024-05/fy24-bil-lslr-allotments-memorandum_may-2024.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> James M. Inhofe National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2023, Pub. L. No. 117-347 § 8375(b)(2)(H).

<sup>7</sup> *Id.* at § 8119(a)(3)(B).