

*Introduced by Senator Tammy Baldwin (WI) and Senator Susan Collins (ME)*

## **The Healthy Drinking Water Affordability Act (The Healthy H2O Act)**

*Legislation that would provide direct assistance to rural communities, households, and non-profits to test their drinking water and fund filtration technology to provide safer drinking water*

**Problem:** Rural communities have historically been overlooked by federal investments when it comes to addressing drinking water challenges, especially those who are dependent on private wells.

**Solution:** We can protect public health and use voluntary solutions to address a key gap in drinking water safety, by **ensuring people have tools to:**

- **Test their drinking water**
- **Understand the impact of health contaminants found in their water sources**
- **Access a solution that best fits their situation**

**Untreated health contaminants threaten water quality for millions of people.** Across the United States, communities face threats to their drinking water from a number of contaminants, including lead, arsenic, nitrates, volatile organic compounds (VOCs), PFOA, PFOS, hexavalent chromium-6, and others. Public water systems monitor for these threats and treat water before it is distributed to points of consumption. However, nearly 23 million households rely exclusively on groundwater delivered through private wells for their drinking water. This water is not subject to the same regular oversight and testing for contamination, which can delay the identification of and response to health threats. Children are especially vulnerable to water contaminants such as lead and PFAS, and water filtration systems can often provide relief for families upon installation.

**Solutions are available but access and use need to be increased to protect public health.** There are many ready-to-use technologies for testing and water treatment at the point of consumption. The challenge is that many people do not realize they may be at risk or understand how to identify an effective treatment solution. Low-cost technology solutions installed at the faucet or within a building can provide short-term and ongoing protection from known and emerging water contaminants. These solutions are especially critical because they provide a rapidly deployable solution to newly discovered water contamination. These water issues are often overlooked by existing federal water programs that are mostly focused on assistance for public water systems.

**The Healthy Drinking Water Affordability Act or “Healthy H2O Act” would drive positive public health benefits for millions of rural, underserved communities (populations of 10,000 or less) with persistent water challenges that lack near-term solutions to contamination by:**

- Providing grants to conduct water quality testing and the purchase, installation, and maintenance of point-of-use or point-of-entry water treatment systems that remove or reduce health-based contaminants from drinking water.
- Providing grants to eligible individuals, licensed child-care facilities, and non-profits equipped to help people go through the process of testing their water and installing a water treatment product to address their situation.
- Requiring water treatment systems funded through the program be third-party certified to address the health-based contaminant found in their drinking water.

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