Mayors & EPA to Begin Dialogue Focused on Protecting Human Health and Environment at an Affordable Cost for Residents

WASHINGTON, DC – Earlier this month, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) officials met with members of The U.S. Conference of Mayors (USCM), to discuss the affordable implementation of clean water standards for the American people. During a Water Council Summit meeting hosted by the USCM on October 5, the nation’s mayors discussed ensuring access to clean water in their communities while limiting costs for low and middle-income residents.

“The mayors of this nation and EPA have a shared commitment to protecting human health and improving the environment, and if we can determine how we can reach those goals in an affordable manner than that is a win-win for everyone,” said U.S. Conference of Mayors President Philadelphia Mayor Michael Nutter.

The Conference asked, and EPA agreed, to enter into an “affordability dialogue” to discuss how to ensure access to clean water in an affordable fashion.

So far, from 1972 – 2009, local governments have spent a total of $920.8 billion on drinking water systems and $745.7 billion on sewer systems, totaling an expenditure of $1.67 trillion. In fact, in the last 5 years according to published Census data (2005-2009), local governments spent over $466 billion on water and wastewater systems alone. This makes local governments the single biggest investor in protecting human health and improving the environment throughout the nation.

“Our nation’s mayors have proudly made protecting our nation’s water systems such a high priority that our drinking water is among the safest in the world. Ongoing cooperation with our federal partners will allow us to continue to do this,” said Tom Cochran, CEO and Executive Director of the U.S. Conference of Mayors. “It is everyone’s responsibility to pitch in to protect our nation’s most important resource, our water.”

Cities now spend around 6-7 cents of every tax dollar collected from their citizens on water and sewer, which is the third biggest expense for cities behind education and emergency personnel. The goal for the dialogue is to identify near and long term ideas as to how to assure safe and clean water but in a cost-effective and affordable manner.

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