

CLEAN WATER

Clean water is essential to the health of children, and access to clean, safe drinking water is a basic human right and should never be compromised. However, water scarcity and lack of access to clean water remain tremendous challenges affecting children, families, and communities in the United States and globally.

Water can become polluted in many ways. For example, water from rivers and lakes can be polluted by storm water runoff, pesticide runoff, and industrial waste. Groundwater can be contaminated by disease-producing microbes, leachate from landfills and septic systems, careless disposal of hazardous household products, agricultural chemicals, and leaking underground storage tanks. Additionally, old plumbing in buildings and water systems may contribute to lead pollution in drinking water. Moreover, the effects of climate change are making the availability of clean drinking water to be further impacted.

The public also has a right to know what contaminants have been found in municipal drinking water supplies, but this information is often shared in a way that is difficult for a layperson to access and understand. Even though progress has been made by federal and state governments to reduce water pollution through the Clean Water Act (1972) and the Safe Drinking Water Act (1974), concern still remains about the safety provided by this legislation due to improper implementation and enforcement. For example, federal law and regulations mandate that consumers have the opportunity to provide input on proposed projects that could impact drinking water but are often unaware of this opportunity to comment during the permitting process. Collectively, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and states issue thousands of permits annually, establishing important monitoring and pollution limits for publicly owned treatment works, industrial facilities, and stormwater discharges nationwide. However, this is not enough and there continues to be cities, counties, and states that do not provide safe drinking water for families especially in our black and brown communities.

Current federal laws clearly do not adequately ensure clean water for all of our nation's children and families. Therefore, federal laws such as the Clean Water Act must be updated, especially in an effort to resolve some of the law's ambiguities and better protect public health and prevent water contamination and pollution.

In 2021, Congress passed the bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, which included significant funding for expanding access to clean drinking water, investing in water quality infrastructure and eliminating lead service pipes, and addressing evolving contaminants in water. Continued investments in our nation's water infrastructure can help ensure all children and families can access clean and safe drinking water.

The National PTA and its constituent associations:

- Strongly urge Congress to update and strengthen The Clean Water Act to ensure more effective management, reporting, and accountability mechanisms of safe drinking water practices and more meaningful community engagement;
- Support advocacy work and policy priorities around defending clean water safeguards, improving water infrastructure, and reducing pollution aimed to ensure that all communities have access to clean water;
- Advocate for strong, strict water quality standards, laws, and regulations that help ensure a healthy environment for all children, families and communities including in underserved communities;
- Work with partner organizations and decision makers to support effective implementation of local, state, and federal legislation and compliance with regulations to maintain the highest possible levels of water quality;
- Urge decision makers to implement legislation and regulations to allow cities, counties, and states to have higher water quality standards than the federal standards;
- Ensure Right-To-Know legislation and regulations in order to engage families and the public in decisions impacting their drinking water and to increase awareness of environmental health hazards in their community and environmental programs relating to the water cycle and water preservation.

Adopted: by the 1997 Convention Delegates

Amended: by the 2022 Board of Directors