


## Private companies invest in water infrastructure

A recent editorial misses the mark on the reality of the Illinois water infrastructure. Focusing all attention on water rates while ignoring the importance of water quality and reliability is shortsighted at best.

Americans should be able to count on safe water and reliable service. Unfortunately, this is not the case for many, due to a variety of factors that largely stem from aging infrastructure and deferred investment.



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Many communities and government-run water systems in Illinois and across the U.S. defer investing in infrastructure. Keeping rates artificially low due to political pressures or lacking the operational expertise to run complex water systems often results in failing water infrastructure, unsafe water and unreliable water service.

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The data clearly shows many communities across Illinois are struggling, and residents are paying the ultimate price with unsafe water. Almost 200 community water systems in Illinois, serving a combined 954,000 people, had “significant deficiencies” in their latest Safe Drinking Water Act Survey. Almost 800 systems, which serve a combined 6 million people, have had a Safe Drinking Water Act violation of some kind over the past three years.

When regulated, private water companies assume operations of struggling systems, they are often making up for years, even decades, of under-investment and infrastructure neglect. System privatization is not the root of these rate increases. It takes investment to replace failing pipes, upgrade treatment plants and implement water quality technology. The result might be higher rates, but the result is safe, reliable water.

The editorial ignored the millions of dollars that Illinois' regulated, private water companies of annual infrastructure invest, and these same water companies lead the way in providing assistance programs to customers who are struggling financially. In fact, regulated, private water companies offer assistance programs at much higher frequency than government-run systems, which are often unable to offer help due to oversight constraints.

A flippant call to reverse course in the state is void of policy solutions that have a chance of resulting in more Illinoisans having safe drinking water. Residents would be much better served by solutions that tap into the proven record of regulated, private water companies.

*Robert F. Powelson, CEO and president, National Association of Water Companies*

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