

May 19, 2025

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Chair, Senate Appropriations
Subcommittee
on Interior, Environment, and Related
Agencies
522 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Simpson
Chair, House Appropriations
Subcommittee
on Interior, Environment, and Related
Agencies
2084 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jeff Merkley
Ranking Member, Senate
Appropriations Subcommittee
on Interior, Environment, and Related
Agencies
531 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chellie Pingree
Ranking Member, House Appropriations
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies
2354 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Recommendation to Prioritize Federal Funding for Water Operator Certification Programs

Dear Chairwoman Murkowski, Ranking Member Merkley, Chairman Simpson, and Ranking Member Pingree:

On behalf of Water Professionals International (WPI), we respectfully ask that Congress include report language in the FY26 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill recommending that federal funding for water and wastewater infrastructure projects be prioritized in a manner that supports certified operators and programs that follow industry standards for water and wastewater operator certification.

Water Professionals International (WPI) (formerly the Association of Boards of Certification) is a nonprofit organization established in 1972 to promote the integrity and quality of water and wastewater operator certification. WPI works with certifying authorities in 49 U.S. states and territories, 12 Canadian provinces, tribal communities, and partners internationally. WPI has helped certify more than 500,000 water professionals over the last five decades.

As you may know, the water and wastewater sector is currently facing a pressing workforce challenge. A 2021 report found that 88% of treatment plant operators are aged 45 or older, and with 30% to 50% of the water utility workforce expected to retire within the next decade, operators and regulatory compliance could be at risk.¹ This looming shortfall is echoed by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), which has emphasized the need for training, recruitment, and professional development across the industry to address this gap.

To recruit and retain a strong operator workforce, we recommend that federal agencies prioritize investments in infrastructure and workforce development programs that maintain high standards and promote best industry practices. These programs provide clear career pathways to attract new entrants into the profession, make it easier for certified professionals to move across state or regional boundaries, and increase workforce retention and morale through recognition of operator expertise and competence. Additionally, we encourage allowing states to use Drinking Water and Clean Water State Revolving Funds (SRFs) to support operator training and certification, especially in underserved and rural communities.

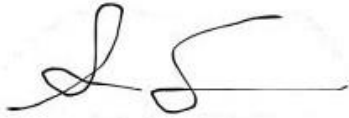
By guiding funds toward these programs, federal policymakers can ensure that utilities across the country are staffed by qualified professionals who protect public health and maintain the integrity of our nation's water systems.

We welcome the opportunity to provide additional information or serve as a resource to help shape effective policies in this space. If you have any questions or need any information, please feel free to contact me at +1 (515) 232-3623 or pbishop@gowpi.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul D. Bishop". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Paul D. Bishop, CAE
President and Chief Executive Officer
Water Professionals International



Scott Serino

Ground/Water Treatment and Technology (GWTT)

Director of Operations and Maintenance



Brian Richardson

Lakehaven Water and Sewer District

Operations Assistant Manager



Tessa Scheuer

Utah Wastewater Operator Certification Program

Environmental Program Coordinator



Alan Cranford

Murfreesboro Water Resources Department

Water Treatment Plant Manager

Pamela Monaghan

Alabama Dept. of Environmental Management

Senior Environmental Engineering Specialist

Rob Fleming

First Nations Health Authority

Manager of Drinking Water Safety Program

Thomas Crawford

Native American Water Association

President and CEO