



# 2019 Legislative Issue Briefs



## Water Supply & Water Quality

### Statement:

The Florida League of Cities SUPPORTS legislation to address the state's critical water resource and water quality deficiencies to mitigate the negative economic impact of these deficiencies through priority corrective actions and funding. The legislation should include:

- establishment of a dedicated and recurring source of state funding to meet current and projected local government water supply and water infrastructure needs;
- annual assessment by the State of the state, regional and local water resource and water quality infrastructure improvement needs; and
- development of regional plans to prioritize actions and schedules for addressing integrated water quality and water supply needs based on objective criteria.

### Background:

Florida's ability to meet the water needs of its growing population, industries and natural environment exceeds available supply and infrastructure. It is estimated that \$48.71 billion will be needed over the next 20 years to meet needs for drinking water and wastewater, flood control, nutrient pollution, Everglades restoration, and beach and inlet erosion. Florida does not have a dedicated long-term, recurring source of funding for water supply, water quality and associated infrastructure.

In 2005 the legislature created the Water Protection and Sustainability Program, providing \$100 million in recurring revenues for water projects, with local funding match requirements and transparent grant criteria. Funding was reduced and ultimately eliminated as the state slipped into the Great Recession. 2016 legislation required septic tank remediation plans for certain spring sheds and provided dedicated percentages of Amendment 1 money for the benefit of the Everglades and surrounding estuaries, Lake Apopka and springs. 2017 legislation offered a \$1.5 billion plan for water storage needed to combat nutrient pollution in estuaries around Lake Okeechobee. These remedies will help address acute, regional issues, but statewide water supply and water quality deficits persist and continue to grow and threaten Florida's economy and environment.

The development of a successful and ensuring statewide water funding program will be a multi-year process. It is critical for the state to first obtain an accurate assessment of current and future water infrastructure needs to help quantify the extent of the need. Since 2016, the state Office of Economic and Demographic Research (EDR) has conducted an annual assessment of Florida water resources to help assess what is needed to meet demand and the requirements of law, how much is being expended to meet those needs, and what may be needed to meet those needs in the future. This report will continue to be refined over time. More immediate information is needed in the short-term, however, to better inform legislators about prioritizing and maximizing efficient use of state funds and lay the groundwork for development of a long-term statewide water funding program.

Legislation is needed to identify potential funding sources for a long-term, dedicated and recurring source of state funding. In addition, legislation is needed to authorize the Department of Environmental Protection to quantify water supply, water quality, flood control and environmental (habitat) restoration infrastructure needs over a 20-year planning timeframe. This will aid legislators in making budgeting and policy decisions about funding priorities, sources and criteria in the intermediate timeframe and help our state address the most critical needs in a timely manner.

**Status:**

**SB 628** (Albritton) and **HB 1199** (Jacobs) would revise current law requirements for the state Office of Economic and Demographic Research's (EDR) annual assessment of Florida water resources. The bills would require the EDR to consult with the Department of Environmental Protection in developing the annual assessment and clarify the factors and criteria that EDR is required for the assessment. The bills would also require EDR to identify a comprehensive list of funding options necessary to fulfill any funding gaps identified in the needs assessment, taking into consideration existing revenue sources, potential additional revenue sources, and funding mechanisms used by other states for water infrastructure and environmental restoration. SB 628 passed the Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources on March 26 and is now in the Senate Infrastructure & Security Committee. HB 1199 has been referred to the following House committees: Agriculture & Natural Resources; Appropriations; and State Affairs.

**Revised:** 3/29/2019