



# 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. The first step will be to obtain an accurate assessment of current and future water infrastructure needs to help quantify the extent of the need. In 2016, the state's Office of Economic and Demographic Research (EDR) began conducting an annual assessment of Florida water resources to help quantify the extent of the state's water infrastructure needs. The EDR assessment report should be refined and enhanced to identify future needs over the short, intermediate and long-term timeframes. This needs assessment and identification will assist policymakers in prioritizing and maximizing efficient use of state funds.

In the 2019 session, the legislature should take initial steps to lay the groundwork for development of a long-term statewide water funding program. First, 2019 legislation should identify potential funding sources for a long-term, dedicated and recurring source of state funding. At the same time, 2019 legislation should revisit the EDR water assessment report and clarify some of its requirements to ensure that better data is collected and reported.

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