



Building the Will to Invest:
A Progress Report from the
Value of Water Campaign



Preface

Three years ago, top leaders in the water industry came together to establish a shared vision for how to better communicate the value of water and the infrastructure that brings it to and from homes and businesses. Utilities, engineering companies, and policy groups set a big, audacious goal: launch a disciplined and sustained educational effort to build the public and political will to dramatically increase investment in our nation's aging and failing water infrastructure. The campaign would align everyone who has a stake in our nation's water future to make progress together.

Together, we devised an ambitious three-year strategy. We set aside our individual policy positions or differences of opinions, and spoke with one voice on the value of water.

We are proud to share our progress to date. The Value of Water Campaign's success is only possible because water industry leaders aligned, collaborated, and spoke as one. As the saying goes, many hands make light work. When we speak with one voice, our message is heard loud and clear across the country, in the halls of Congress, on social media, and more.

We have done incredible work together, but this is only the beginning. The Value of Water Campaign has exciting opportunities ahead, and we invite all who care about our nation's water infrastructure to join us.

Radhika Fox

Chief Executive Officer, US Water Alliance
On behalf of the Value of Water Campaign

Value of Water Campaign (2018 Supporters)



Introduction

The Value of Water Campaign was created as a solution to two parallel challenges in the water sector: lack of awareness about the state of our nation's water infrastructure and fragmentation in the water sector. Often referred to as "out of sight and out of mind," thousands of miles of pipes are buried underground and pump stations and treatment plants are tucked away in places the public doesn't go. While our water infrastructure dutifully served the nation, 24/7/365, decades of deferred maintenance has taken its toll.

As infrastructure needs increase, federal investment in water systems has decreased substantially over the past 40 years. Without a strong federal partner, the water sector is left with a shrinking pool of options to find the revenue needed to maintain the level of water service Americans expect. Which is why fragmentation across the water sector makes it even more challenging to address the need for infrastructure investment. Utilities across the country are making the case for infrastructure at the local level, but fragmentation in the sector partitions them off from one another. The reality is, water infrastructure is a growing *national* issue. When the sector struggles to speak with a unified voice, it is easy for elected officials and other decision-makers to continue the "out of sight, out of mind" mentality.

The Value of Water Campaign was created to unify the water sector and educate the nation about the state of our water infrastructure and the need to invest in it. Here we share our progress over the past three years.

Research-backed messages to move public opinion

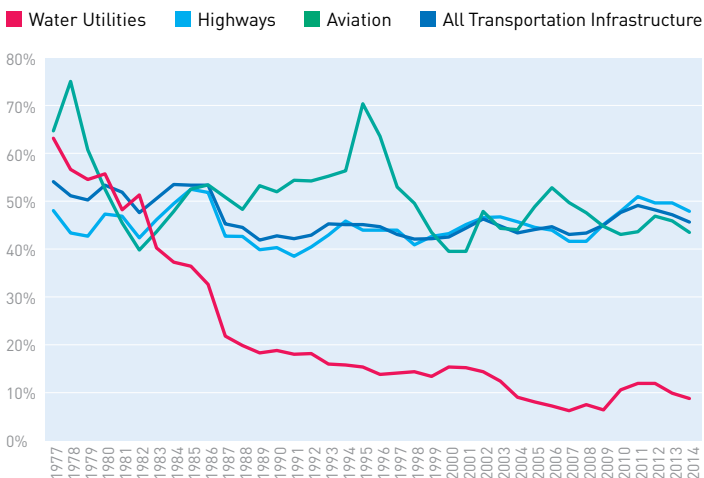
The Value of Water Campaign routinely conducts public opinion research to gauge where Americans stand on water issues. Our results equip water advocates with research-backed messages, data, and a fuller understanding of trends in public opinion so the entire sector can become better messengers.

The Value of Water Campaign's [public opinion research](#) and focus groups test and identify messages that resonate with target audiences, so all of our supporters have a more nuanced understanding of how to effectively communicate. Our polling results also provide the water sector with data to make the case to local and national decision-makers that there is broad support for investing in water.

For example, support for rebuilding the nation's infrastructure increased by 13 percent between 2017 and 2018, from 67 percent to 80 percent. The Value of Water national poll also finds water infrastructure is a topic that consistently resonates nationally. No other topic the Campaign polls, such as funding for national defense or immigration, receives nearly as much broad, bipartisan support.

Americans' support for rebuilding our nation's infrastructure increased from 2017 to 2018 from **67 to 80 percent**.

Federal Contribution to Total Infrastructure Spending



Source: CBO 2015.

Tools and resources that make the case

The Campaign's "What's the Value of Water?" Toolkit has been downloaded over 3,000 times since its launch in 2015. Created to help local water stakeholders make the case for reinvesting in water infrastructure, the "What's the Value of Water?" Toolkit contains message guides and high-quality, accessible, and customizable advertising collateral. When the Value of Water Campaign surveyed those who downloaded the toolkit, 80 percent of respondents say the toolkit changed how they communicated about water.

The Value of Water Campaign also increases awareness of our key issues with elected officials through reports like *The Economic Benefits of Investing in Water Infrastructure*. Released in 2017, the report contrasts the opportunities created by investing in water with the potential economic disruption caused if water systems failed for just one day. This economic benefit of investing, and cost of continuing to underinvest, is an important message for policymakers to understand given that federal investment in water has plummeted over the last 40 years.

Create high-impact events and opportunities

The Value of Water Campaign organizes and participates in high-impact events to foster connections and provide platforms to share information, generate ideas, and engage influencers. The Value of Water Campaign uses its network to facilitate dialogue and exchange between topical experts and supporters seeking knowledge.

In 2016, the Value of Water Campaign joined the Infrastructure Week steering committee to ensure water was always represented in the infrastructure conversation. Infrastructure Week is a collaborative effort among policy groups and issue advocates who seek to raise awareness about the state of our nation's infrastructure and the need to modernize all our systems: transit, energy, aviation, and more.

As participation in Infrastructure Week has grown over the past three years, from 150 groups in 2015 to 420 groups in 2018, so has water's role. Water sector representation among Infrastructure Week participants increased from under five percent in 2015 to nearly 13 percent in 2018.

Since 2015, water sector representation among all Infrastructure Week participants has **nearly tripled**.

Communication collateral from the "What's the Value of Water?" Toolkit, available as full- and half-page ads, bill stuffers, billboards, and banners.



The Value of Water Campaign released a study on the economic impacts of investing in—or ignoring—water infrastructure.



Buffalo Mayor, Byron Brown, proclaims October 10th Imagine a Day Without Water alongside Buffalo Sewer Authority General Manager, Oluwole McFoy.



The Value of Water Campaign, National League of Cities, and National Association of Counties hosted a featured Infrastructure Week event.



Reaching millions of Americans with our message through the media

The Value of Water Campaign is increasing the quality and quantity of water-related media coverage, and we are increasing public awareness about the importance of investing in water systems.

The Value of Water Campaign's strategically-timed media tours reach millions. Annually, we conduct television and radio media tours to spread our message to the American public. Through 150 radio and TV interviews, we've shared our messages and research results with over 28 million viewers and listeners between 2015 and fall 2018.

Looking Ahead

Investing in water infrastructure is a precondition to overcoming the many, unprecedented water challenges on the horizon. The Value of Water Campaign plays a pivotal role in driving public opinion and decision-makers to understand the connections between water infrastructure and American prosperity. Over the last three years, the Campaign made incredible strides. Campaign supporters also know the work is just beginning as shifting the national perspective on the value of water is generational work.

Over the next two years, the Value of Water Campaign looks forward to working with new partners. Together, we can make water infrastructure challenges visible and persuade policymakers to protect communities, the economy, the environment, and the nation as a whole.

**Building national will for investment in water
infrastructure and water resources**



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