

Introduced by Senator Tammy Baldwin (WI)

The Healthy Drinking Water Affordability Act (The Healthy H₂O Act)

Legislation would provide grants to families and rural stakeholders for water testing and filtration technology to provide healthy drinking water

Problem—Many people don't know if their drinking water is safe; many don't access treatment solutions that could protect their health

Solution—We can protect public health and use voluntarily solutions to address a key gap in drinking water safety, by **ensuring people have tools to:**

- **Test their water**
- **Understand any risks they face**
- **Access a solution that best fits their situation**

Untreated water contaminants threaten water quality for millions of people.

Across the United States, communities face threats to their drinking water from a number of contaminants, including lead, arsenic, nitrates, volatile organic compounds (VOCs), PFOA, PFOS, hexavalent chromium-6, and others. Public water systems monitor for these threats and treat water before it is distributed to points of use. However, nearly 43 million households rely exclusively on groundwater delivered through private wells for their drinking water. This water is not subject to the same regular oversight and testing for contamination, which can delay identification of and response to health threats.

We have solutions, but need to increase access and use to protect public health.

We already have many technologies for testing and water treatment at the point of use. The challenge is that many people do not realize they may be at risk, and it can be very confusing and expensive to sort through local risks and get set up with an effective treatment solution.

We need a better solution for the water issues that are not addressed by existing USDA and EPA programs that focus assistance on public water systems and are often tailored to a specific set of regulated contaminants. Low-cost technology solutions installed at the faucet or within a building can provide short-term and ongoing protections from known and emerging water contaminants. These solutions are especially critical because they provide a rapidly deployable solution to newly discovered water contamination. Children are especially vulnerable to water contaminants such as lead and PFAS, and these treatment systems can provide relief for families upon installation.

The Healthy Drinking Water Affordability Act or “Healthy H₂O Act” would:

- Provide grants for water quality testing, purchase and installation of point-of-use or point-of-entry water filtration systems that remove or significantly reduce health-based contaminants from drinking water
- Grants would be provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) in two ways:
 - Directly to individuals
 - To non-profits or local governments to help people go through the process of testing and then finding and installing a water treatment product to address their situation
- Deploy effective solutions to challenging water problems: water filtration products funded through the program must perform reliably as certified by a certification body accredited by the American National Standards Institute and address the risks faced by the applicant
- Require that the USDA publish public annual reports on the technologies available and purchased by eligible grant recipients, trends on steps taken to ensure safe drinking water in communities and households, and recommendations on increasing utilization of treatment when appropriate
- Drive positive public health benefits for millions of rural and underserved communities, including communities with persistent water challenges that lack near-term solutions to contamination

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