



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

MASSACHUSETTS SENATE
STATE HOUSE, BOSTON 02133-1054

James B. Eldridge

STATE SENATOR

Middlesex & Worcester District

ROOM 413-A, STATE HOUSE

TEL. [\(617\) 722-1120](tel:6177221120)

Chair, Joint Committee on Housing

Vice Chair, Global Warming and

Climate Change

Committees on Mental Health

and Substance Abuse

& Telecommunications, Utilities

& Energy

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

2/27/2014

CONTACT: Megan Montgomery

[774-239-4625](tel:7742394625), megan.montgomery@masenate.gov

SENATOR ELDRIDGE VOTES TO PASS DRINKING WATER AND WASTEWATER REFORM

BOSTON – The Senate on Thursday passed legislation 37-0 that combines reform with increased commitments to improve existing partnerships with cities and towns, grow municipal options while incentivizing best management practices and responsibly address water and wastewater infrastructure challenges in the Commonwealth.

"I am extremely pleased that the Senate passed An Act Improving Drinking Water and Wastewater Infrastructure today," said Senator Jamie Eldridge (D-Acton). "This bill, which I was proud to have filed with the Senate President, is the first step in making critical investments in our state's water infrastructure while instituting reforms that will better protect our environment, water supply and make measurable contributions to public safety, economic development, tourism and the overall quality of life across the Commonwealth."

"It is our responsibility to ensure that the Commonwealth's future will not be limited by our access to clean drinking water," Senate President Therese Murray (D-Plymouth) said. "This bill takes the first step in addressing our water and wastewater infrastructure challenges and I am proud of the Senate for taking action on this important issue. The state of our water infrastructure is strongly linked to the

health of our economy and a commitment to improving our water infrastructure is a commitment to improving our economic strengths.”

The bill significantly expands the spending capacity of the Massachusetts Clean Water Trust, formerly the Water Pollution Abatement Trust, with an increase from \$88 million to \$138 million and imposes a spending floor of 80 percent. To allow for more flexibility, the bill creates a sliding scale interest rate from 0 to 2 percent and establishes a principal forgiveness program for qualifying projects.

The Massachusetts Clean Water Trust currently holds a “AAA” rating from Moody’s, Fitch and Standard & Poor’s and is the only statewide municipal bond issuer to maintain a “AAA” from all three major rating agencies.

The bill also creates and allocated \$3 million to a technical assistance program to be used for the development of asset management plans and to identify green infrastructure opportunities in the Commonwealth.

To aid coastal towns in developing alternative wastewater disposal options, the bill amends the Ocean Sanctuaries Act to create an approval process through DEP for discharging municipally treated wastewater into ocean sanctuaries.

To defray the cost of the entry fee, which often acts as a barrier for cities and towns wanting to join the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA), DEP is also permitted to administer a matching grant program for communities seeking to join the MWRA or any other regional system.

Created by the Legislature in 1984 to provide wholesale water and sewer services, 61 communities are MWRA members, including 51 for drinking water purposes and 43 for wastewater purposes. Member communities still operate their own local distribution networks, which connect to the MWRA.

The bill also does the following:

- Gives the Public-Private Partnership Oversight Commission authority to assist in evaluating proposal for public-private partnerships received by cities and towns;
- Simplifies the regulatory burden of complying with Title V;
- Encourages regional projects by allowing public entities to jointly apply for planning grants to develop water pollution abatement plans;
- Requires DEP to disseminate regulations requiring interruption devices on newly installed or renovated irrigation systems; and
- Requires the Massachusetts Clean Water Trust to consult with the Division of Local Services to establish and publish guidelines for best management practices in water management.

The bill will now go to the House of Representatives for consideration.

###