

Federal Legislative Priorities



The Orange County Water District manages the Orange County Groundwater Basin that supplies 77% of the water supply to 2.5 million people in north and central Orange County. Below are the District's top policy priorities for 2021.

1 Preserve the Safe Drinking Water Act's use of cost-benefit analysis in the development of drinking water standards such as PFAS family of chemicals and other constituents of emerging concern. Oppose all legislative efforts to amend the Safe Drinking Water Act regarding the use of cost-benefit analysis in the development of drinking water standards, including: 1) Assistance, Quality, and Affordability Act of 2021 (H.R. 3291) and 2) PFAS Action Act of 2021 (H.R. 2467). Under existing law, USEPA ensures that public health benefits of new drinking water standards are reasonably balanced with the compliance costs that water system ratepayers will ultimately incur. Eliminating the current cost-benefit analysis in the development of drinking water standards will burden ratepayers of all income levels with astronomical costs to comply with drinking water standards that far exceed public health benefits.

2 Exempt water and wastewater agencies from any liability for PFAS clean-up costs. Oppose designation of PFAS family of chemicals and other constituents of emerging concern as hazardous substances under the nation's hazardous waste site cleanup law CERCLA (Superfund) unless public water agencies are exempted from liability for cleanups of such contamination. The PFAS Action Act of 2021 (H.R. 2467) would expose water agencies with across-the-board liability for PFAS-related cleanup that simply receive and treat water supplies and have no responsibility for the presence of PFAS. OCWD requests that you secure an explicit exemption, under any federal PFAS legislation, from Superfund clean-up liability; like the exemption the nation's airports enjoy. A water utility that complies with applicable and appropriate federal management and treatment standards must not be responsible for current and future costs associated with a PFAS clean-up.

3 Provide funding for PFAS remediation to water and wastewater agencies. Provide direct grant funding to water and wastewater agencies as provided in the Senate-passed Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (H.R. 3684). Grants would support the treatment of emerging contaminants and provide assistance to develop and implement local source control programs to reduce PFAS discharges into treatment works. As passed by the Senate, H.R. 3684 would provide a total of \$10 billion for these activities over FYs 2022–2026.

4 Prioritize funding to construct large scale water supply facilities to support urban and agricultural needs which otherwise would not be constructed without such funding. Examples of these type of projects should include above and below ground storage of surface and storm water, water reuse, brackish water, and seawater desalination. Local, state and federal officials should collaborate on projects and prioritize the necessary funding. Use of such funds for environmental restoration should be for project impact mitigation and funds for environmental improvements should be classified under their own category.