



Developing The Water Infrastructure Workforce

Key Facts:

- **Roughly one-half to one-third of the water sector workforce is eligible to retire within the next 10 years.**¹
- As many as **1.9 million manufacturing jobs may go unfilled by 2030**² – threatening essential supply chains across the waterworks industry.
- According to several industry surveys, **nearly 80% of commercial construction contractors have reported a moderate to high level of difficulty in finding skilled employees.**³
- According to industry estimates, **at least 439,000 additional employees will be needed across the construction industry to meet demand in 2025 alone, with an additional 499,000 needed in 2026.**⁴

Issue Background:

All parts of the waterworks industry continue to face a critical skilled workforce shortage. Despite raising wages and offering attractive benefits packages, distributors and manufacturers continue to report substantial difficulties in attracting and retaining employees. This shortage of qualified applicants has persisted for several years and will likely continue to worsen as retirements increase and construction activity picks up due to increased demand, federal investment, and the need to comply with federal water quality regulations. Trends affecting many other American industries have impacted the water infrastructure world as well – there are simply not enough young Americans entering the industry with the necessary skills to

¹ <https://www.epa.gov/sustainable-water-infrastructure/water-sector-workforce>

² <https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/pages/about-deloitte/articles/press-releases/us-manufacturing-could-need-new-employees-by-2033.html>

³ <https://www.agc.org/sites/default/files/users/user21902/2025%20Construction%20Hiring%20and%20Business%20Outlook%20Report.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.abc.org/News-Media/News-Releases/abc-construction-industry-must-attract-439000-workers-in-2025>



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replace those retiring from the workforce. And for those that do, it takes years of training to master the complex roles that build, maintain, and supply America's waterworks facilities and infrastructure.

The skills and workforce gaps pose a substantial challenge to meeting the goals of rebuilding American water infrastructure and reorganizing supply chains in the face of changing market conditions and federal regulations. Several WASDA-supported pieces of legislation would provide much-needed resources for our technical and vocational education system and help address industry needs. The 118th Congress nearly came to an agreement on reauthorizing the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and the 119th Congress must finish the job. However, there is more room for action. Educational programs can take years to show progress towards increasing the number of skilled employees available for work, and legislation for key bills that would support and expand access to short-term training programs has stalled. Congress needs to take quick action to address workforce shortages, lest we miss the opportunities presented by recent federal investment in American infrastructure.

What can Congress do to help?

- **WASDA Ask:** Support programs that will help meet workforce demands of the water/wastewater distribution, manufacturing, and construction industries, by dedicating additional federal funding to the EPA Innovative Water Infrastructure Workforce Development Program and similar grant programs.
- **WASDA Ask:** Pass the Stronger Workforce for America Act (H.R. 6655, 118th Congress), which amends and reauthorizes the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (WIOA) and supports the development of a stronger skills-based economy.
- **WASDA Ask:** Expand the use of Pell Grants to support students enrolling in qualified short-term credential and training programs – pass the JOBS Act of 2025 (S. 383) to establish the Workforce Pell Grant program.



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