

# State budget invests in better data and safe water at schools, but water group claims not enough

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BAKERSFIELD, Calif. - The drinking Water Advocates Coalition commended the state Thursday for investing in safe drinking water for schools, but said it's not enough.

The group issued this statement:

The Drinking Water Advocates Coalition representing rural water advocates, urban water districts, education and children's organizations, and environmental justice, health and equity organizations expressed support for the Legislature's investment in guaranteeing that all Californians have access to safe, clean, and affordable drinking water and urge the Governor to support.

Part of the \$170.9 billion 2016-2017 state budget and supporting trailer bills approved by the Legislature today advanced two key priorities that our Coalition worked hard to see incorporated into the final budget. They are:

- \$9.5 million for school filtration systems to ensure California students, particularly those living in low-income communities or areas of acute water shortage or contamination, have access to safe drinking water, and \$500,000 for nonprofits to provide support for outreach and technical assistance; and
- \$565,000 for four new positions at the State Water Resources Control Board to improve compliance monitoring and data collection.

Our Coalition commends these investments, which bring California closer to delivering on the human right to safe, clean, affordable, and accessible water for every Californian.

However, even as advocates celebrated progress on these two issues, they recognized that this budget leaves other drinking water programs unfunded as well as California as a whole without a sustainable funding source to address long-term needs, including water system operation and maintenance expenses. Advocates pointed out that the budget did not invest in metering and leak detection for small, low-income communities and households, nor did it fully fund solutions for low-income Californians reliant on small water systems and private wells impacted by unsafe or unreliable water.

*Specific remarks from members of the Drinking Water Advocates Coalition:*

"The new funding for school filtration systems, as well as the four new Water Board positions, will meaningfully improve access to safe drinking water in our state and represents a significant step forward. However, our work is still far from finished, so we look forward to partnering with our allies to continue advancing the human right to water in California."

**Laurel Firestone, Co-Executive Director, [Community Water Center](#)**

"We are pleased that California's Legislature prioritized safe drinking water for California's school children in this year's budget, and urge the Governor's support as well. Access to safe drinking water is critical to children's overall health and educational achievement. This funding is particularly important to disadvantaged communities that already deal with multiple challenges."

**Stanley Keasling, CEO, [Rural Community Assistance Corporation](#)**

"This represents a huge step forward in a long journey towards safe, clean and affordable drinking water for kids and families throughout the state."

**Phoebe Seaton, Co-Director and Attorney at Law, [Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability](#)**

"We applaud Leadership for including the budget item for grants to schools impacted by drought or water contamination. This is a vital first step in creating a healthy, sustainable, and equitable drinking water system. We look forward to continuing to work

with the Governor, regulators and the legislature to fund strategies to enforce state law that defines water as a basic human right.”

**Harold Goldstein, DrPH, Executive Director, [Public Health Advocates](#)  
(formerly California Center for Public Health Advocacy)**

"Access to safe water is the foundation of health and food security. We commend the Legislature for the much-needed funding for schools to provide students with safe drinking water. However, we need to do more to ensure that Californians in poverty are not continually burdened by inequitable access to safe water. Families in poverty cannot afford to wait for long-term solutions to our water crisis."

**George Manalo-LeClair, Executive Director, [California Food Policy Advocates](#)**

“Providing free, clean, drinking water in schools is an important strategy to increase consumption of water and decrease consumption of sugary drinks. Overconsumption of sugary drinks can contribute to heart disease, tooth decay, and diabetes, and increased access to water can play a huge role in steering youth away from unhealthy beverages. We thank the Legislature for this budget allocation to provide clean drinking water to children and contribute to their overall wellbeing.”

**Eric Batch, Vice President of Advocacy for the Western States Affiliate of the [American Heart Association](#)**

“We commend Governor Brown and the Legislature for investing in delivering clean and affordable drinking water to California students. This is a positive step forward that we hope continues

so families living in rural, low-income communities, particularly those affected by the persistent drought, can have access to clean drinking water.”

**Paul Boyer, Community Development Director, [Self-Help Enterprises](#)**

“We appreciate the Legislature's commitment to support the needs of drought impacted rural farmworker families and their school communities. We look forward to working towards continued efforts to address the long term sustainability of our communities.”

**Noe Paramo, Co-Director of the Sustainable Rural Communities Project,**  
**California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation**

"We are thrilled that the state of California has taken a step towards prioritizing access to safe drinking water for our children. It is vital that we understand that many times children are the most vulnerable in our communities. This is a great step towards the future and securing safe water access to those in need."

**Sergio Carranza, Executive Director, Pueblo Unido Community**  
**Development Corporation**

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