

Policy Focus	Federal Example
<p><b>National Assistance Program</b></p>	<p><b>Permanent Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP)</b></p> <p>Permanently authorize a Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP) with adequate funding to provide states, territories, and tribes the ability to offer debt forgiveness, bill reduction, service restoration, and disconnection prevention.</p> <p>In July 2025, <a href="#">H.R. 4733</a>, the bipartisan Low-Income Water Assistance Program Establishment Act, was introduced in the House to re-establish the federal LIHWAP program, and, if passed, would authorize \$500 million per year to the program between fiscal years 2026-2030.</p> <p>To learn about the temporary LIHWAP program that existed between 2021 and 2024, <a href="#">check out River Network's five blogs that tracked its impact here</a>.</p>
<p><b>National Assistance Program + Boosting Water Infrastructure Funding + Improving Drinking Water Safety</b></p>	<p><b>Assistance, Quality, and Affordability Act (AQUA Act)</b></p> <p>Develop federal legislation to ban or limit shutoffs, paired with adequate water infrastructure investments that are accessible to small, rural, and economically disadvantaged communities. Legislation could target specific populations, such as low-income households, or households with heightened health risks.</p> <p>An example of potential federal legislation that addresses both funding needs of water systems and assistance for low-income households:</p> <p><a href="#">AQUA Act of 2024</a> (Title 3 focuses on affordability)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The AQUA Act, which was introduced in Congress in 2024 but not passed into law, includes increased funding for various water infrastructure grant and loan programs, measures to strengthen the Safe Drinking Water Act to set health protective standards for new drinking water contaminants, and the establishment of a water affordability program through grants to States and Tribes to develop “drinking water access programs.” Specifically, it would authorize an EPA-administered low-income water assistance program at \$1.5 billion per year through FY2034. It includes provisions such as:</li> <li>• Determining <b>eligibility</b> through <b>data sharing from other income-qualified assistance programs and self-attestation of income qualification</b>.</li> <li>• Enabling a State or Tribe to contract the drinking water access program to community water systems, with requirements to maintain a long-term financial plan, an asset management plan, a capital improvement plan, and a fiscal management plan, and conduct effective community outreach about the program.</li> <li>• Setting <b>reporting requirements</b>, including the number of eligible households that receive assistance, the average amount of assistance provided to eligible households, the percentage of eligible households that receive assistance, the average amount of bill debt carried by households before and after enrollment, <b>the number of annual service disconnections for nonpayment</b>, the resources from community water systems used to resolve delinquent bills, and the percent of on-time bill payments.</li> <li>• <b>Prohibiting community water systems that receive funding from a drinking water access program to “disconnect or interrupt the service of any eligible household as a result of nonpayment or arrearages during any period of one year that begins on the date on which the eligible household receives covered assistance under the drinking water access program.”</b></li> <li>• <a href="#">Read the full legislative text here!</a></li> </ul>