

HELP CITIES CLEAN OUR WATERWAYS: SUPPORT A REASONABLE TIMEFRAME & FISCALLY RESPONSIBLE PROCESS FOR INCREASING REUSE OF RECLAIMED WASTEWATER

The Florida League of Cities **SUPPORTS** legislation that will help fiscally constrained municipalities eliminate, with specified exceptions, non-beneficial discharges to surface waters.

BACKGROUND

The League anticipates **another push in the Legislature to impose a prohibition on the discharge of treated wastewater by utilities**. This rushed action could harm Florida's waterways, cause an increase in costs and potentially raise taxes without positively impacting water quality.

The **proposal may require a very short time frame of five years for eliminating such discharges** and may provide certain exemptions for "beneficial" discharges and for fiscally constrained local governments.

The potential cost of implementation to Florida

taxpayers would be **approximately \$23 billion**.

If **similar legislation passes in 2021**, many utilities will have to:

- Change their current practices with no environmental benefit, including those that have already invested in costly advanced wastewater treatment technology.
- Divert limited resources from high-priority projects such as sewer overflow preventions and septic-to-sewer conversions.
- Abide by an extremely restrictive timeline given the massive size and scope of the projects.

KEY MESSAGES FOR 2021

Florida leads the nation in water reuse.

Cities support continued efforts by utilities to develop new markets and uses for reclaimed wastewater. The cost of utility projects and services, including water reuse projects, is paid by ratepayers in the community. **Project costs should not require rates that exceed what Florida's families can afford.**

State funding assistance may be needed **so project costs don't price residents out of the area due to the added cost of living.**

Potential legislation should:

- Account for a utility's competing financial commitments and obligations for water quality projects, such as sewer overflow prevention and new requirements of SB 712, enacted in 2020.
- Provide exemptions for discharges that are otherwise beneficial or necessary, or if the utility (and its ratepayers) have invested in expensive advanced wastewater treatment systems.
- Allow each utility a reasonable compliance time frame and account for environmental, economic and technical factors unique to the utility and its service area.



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