



Western Tribal Water Act

U.S. Senators Michael Bennet, John Hickenlooper

U.S. Representatives Jeff Hurd, Brittany Pettersen

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Background on the Indian Reservation Drinking Water Program:

Congress established the Indian Reservation Drinking Water Program in the 2018 Water Resource Development Act (WRDA) and expanded the program in the 2021 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. The program authorizes the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to plan, design, and construct drinking water infrastructure projects for Tribal communities with water access difficulties.

The program prioritizes areas without access to clean drinking water and is intended to address the needs of communities affected by contamination, aging infrastructure, or geographic isolation. By prioritizing high-need areas and funding major capital improvements, it aims to improve public health, strengthen infrastructure resilience, and advance equity in federal water investments. The program currently prioritizes specific projects in the Upper Missouri River Basin, Upper Rio Grande River Basin, Columbia River Basin, the Lower Colorado River Basin, and the Arkansas-White-Red River Basin.

Current Problem:

The Indian Reservation Drinking Water Program expires at the end of fiscal year 2026 and has not received appropriated dollars since its enactment in 2018. Despite being home to several Tribes facing a variety of water supply and reliability challenges, including over \$100 million in water infrastructure needs, the Upper Colorado River Basin is not prioritized in this EPA program that helps Tribes in other drought-stricken basins across the West improve their drinking water supplies.

The Western Tribal Water Act would:

- Reauthorize the Indian Reservation Drinking Water Program through 2028;
- Increase the authorization by \$10 million annually, for a total of \$60 million; and
- Prioritize 10 Tribal drinking water projects in the Upper Colorado River Basin.