***Press Release of the Association of State Drinking Water Administrators***

**“Insufficient Resources for State Drinking Water Programs Threaten Public Health”**

***An Analysis of the State Drinking Water Programs’ Resources and Needs***

**January 27, 2014**

***Today, ASDWA is releasing a report documenting a yearly shortfall of at least $230 million between the resources available in states (from all sources – both federal and state) and those needed by states to administer minimum required programs. And, for more robust, comprehensive programs, the gap is even larger -- $308 million; this represents a 41% shortfall when compared to what is needed.*** ***ASDWA’s recommendations, based on these findings (contained in a companion document), are an "all of the above" approach -- there are a number of steps that Congress, EPA, and states can take to help bridge the gap.***

**Ensuring Safe Drinking Water is a Complex, Multi-Faceted Challenge:** Safe drinking water is vital to our communities in innumerable ways: we depend on it in our homes, schools, and businesses. As we prepare to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) in December 2014, we’re reminded that, while a great deal of progress in public health protection has been made, many challenges remain. The SDWA is designed to protect consumers who receive their drinking water from one of the 152,000 public water systems in the U.S. Fully 97% of those systems are small and many require additional support from state drinking water programs. As the requirements for addressing public health risks posed by drinking water contaminants have become more complex and pressing, state program responsibilities for adequately managing sources of drinking water, overseeing the treatment of drinking water, and supervising water systems have all increased. States are tasked with ensuring that all of the federal requirements – and any more stringent state requirements – are met. This is a highly time- and resource-intensive undertaking for state programs; but in their absence, water systems may experience preventable operational or managerial failures which pose potentially serious public health threats for consumers. Recent manmade and natural disasters have served to underscore the criticality of the work that state programs do to help ensure safe drinking water.

**Various Actions are Needed to Address the Gap:**  Investments in state drinking water programs may be perceived by the public as a relatively low priority because state drinking water programs can be “victims of their own success.” A successful, prevention-based program makes few headlines and operates largely outside the public eye, which makes it harder to explain the importance of adequate funding. But the success of these essential state programs is not guaranteed and states continue to face fiscal challenges that compromise their effectiveness. In response to the report’s findings, we believe that Congress, with the support of the Administration, needs to appropriate more funds for state drinking water programs. In addition, we encourage states to consider appropriating more state general funds and, where feasible, instituting new or enhancing existing fee programs. We also urge EPA to allow state flexibility in administering federal requirements, wherever appropriate, and recommend that states adopt program efficiencies to make the best use of available resources.

**The Current Resource Needs Report is the Latest Installment in An Ongoing Story:** ASDWA last reported on this situation in an April 2003 report.  Since that time, the situation has, in many respects, grown worse. ASDWA and states, with the support of EPA and their contractor, Cadmus, Inc., recently conducted an analysis of both current and projected resources needs. A ten state advisory panel “ground-truthed” the overall approach and the findings to ensure their accuracy.

**State-Specific Information**: While the models used in this analysis represent implementation of the drinking water program on a national basis, each state has unique implementation needs and resource issues. Please contact your state’s drinking water program for their assessment of this picture in their state. *For Questions or More Information: Contact Jim Taft at* *jtaft@asdwa.org* *or 703-812-9507*