



SOUTHERN UTE INDIAN TRIBE

September 5, 2023

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
S-221 U.S. Capitol Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
S-230 U.S. Capitol Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Speaker
House of Representatives
2468 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Minority Leader
House of Representatives
2433 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Support for the Tribal Access to Clean Water Act of 2023, S. 2385; HR 4746

Dear Senator Schumer, Senator McConnell, Representative McCarthy, and Representative Jeffries,

On behalf of the Southern Ute Indian Tribe, I am writing to express our strong support for the Tribal Access to Clean Water Act of 2023, S. 2385 and H.R. 4746, which will provide needed technical assistance, capacity, and resources to address the inequity in access to clean water for Tribes.

Access to clean water is a basic human right. Clean water is foundational for human health, growing economies, and a minimum level of support for communities. However, 48 percent of households on Native American reservations do not have clean water or adequate sanitation. Native American homes are nineteen times more likely than non-Native households to lack indoor plumbing.

Thanks to your sponsorship of S. 2385 and H.R. 4746 in the 118th Congress, funding for safe drinking water systems for Tribal communities received a significant boost from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and the Inflation Reduction Act. While groundbreaking and long overdue, the funding now available for construction and repair of domestic water systems in Indian country is not a complete solution. Technical assistance is needed to allow Tribes to plan and design the systems necessary to access clean drinking water and bring those plans to the “shovel ready” stage where they can take advantage of the newly available construction funding. In addition, Tribes need support to develop the managerial, financial, and regulatory capacity required for a fully functional and self-sustaining utility. Finally, because Tribes cannot rely on the same types and volumes of revenue streams to support operation and maintenance (O&M) of water systems, O&M assistance helps to ensure that the benefits of the historic investment in infrastructure are fully realized.

The Tribal Access to Clean Water Act of 2023 would address these gaps and advance the Federal Government's treaty and trust obligations to provide clean and accessible water for Native communities. We strongly support swift passage of The Tribal Access to Clean Water Act.

Sincerely,



Melvin J. Baker
Chairman
Southern Ute Indian Tribe

CC: Hon. Michael Bennet
Hon. John Hickenlooper