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Rep. John Katko Proposes $1 billion to Upgrade Water Infrastructure Systems.

A bill introduced by U.S. Rep. John Katko would provide $1 billion over five years for water infrastructure projects and streamline the application process to help states seeking funding for system upgrades.

The main objective of Katko's bill is to advance projects receiving funding through the State Revolving Fund. He also wants to preserve the Water Infrastructure Financing and Innovation Act, which has supported local water system improvements across the country.

The legislation sponsored by Katko, R-Camillus, would provide $200 million annually over a five-year period to support state revolving fund projects. It would waive a $100,000 application fee for states if projects are bundled.

Another change proposed in the bill is streamlining the federal approval process by allowing projects to receive funding without the Environmental Protection Agency needing to process more loan applications.

There are significant water infrastructure issues in Katko's district. The presence of harmful algal blooms in Owasco Lake, which provides drinking water to the city of Auburn and towns in Cayuga County, has spurred a multi-million dollar response to ensure the drinking water remains safe for residents.

Algal blooms have also been found in Cayuga and Skaneateles lakes, both of which are at least partly in Katko's district.

"In Central New York and communities nationwide, we need to focus on updating our water infrastructure systems to ensure safe, reliable drinking water is available," Katko said in a statement Friday.

Central New York elected officials backed Katko's effort. Oswego Mayor Billy Barlow said if the bill passes, it would provide a significant boost to his city's water infrastructure.

Onondaga County Executive Joanie Mahoney echoed that sentiment.

"(Katko's bill) will provide the additional funding needed to ensure that we can continue investing in our water systems for every resident and business," Mahoney said.

The legislation introduced by Katko is cosponsored by U.S. Rep. Earl Bluemenauer, an Oregon Democrat. The Senate version of the bill has bipartisan support, too. It was introduced by Republican U.S. Sens. John Boozman and James Inhofe and Democratic U.S. Sens. Cory Booker and Dianne Feinstein.

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Feb 3, 2018

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