Bond Case Briefs

Municipal Finance Law Since 1971

U.S. Conference of Mayors Releases New Report on How Competitive Bidding Can Help Nation's Troubled Water Infrastructure.

Report Shows Cities Could Save Billions of Dollars Over Next Decade on Replacing Aging Pipes

Washington, DC—As the nation's aging infrastructure continues to threaten water systems as well as the country's health and economic vitality, a new report released today by the U.S. Conference of Mayors (USCM) shows how cities could potentially save billions of dollars over the next 10 years. The report examines the daunting challenges cities face with replacing hundreds of thousands of miles of aging and failing pipes, which are the single costliest water and sewer capital investment. By changing the competitive bidding process, the report shows that the country could save an estimated **$20.5 billion for drinking water and $22.3 billion for storm water** in pipe material costs alone.

The report reviewed new data comparing cost per foot for different pipe materials and open versus closed procurement processes. It concludes that updating procurement policies can save as much as 30% of capital costs, helping mayors stretch the dollars needed to address local infrastructure challenges.

"The best way for us to protect our cities from a water crisis is to invest in upgrading the water and sewer infrastructure. Local governments already provide nearly 98% of the annual investments needed for their water infrastructure and struggle to keep water rates affordable for their communities. While this report shows promising ways in which cities can implement cost-savings measures, we cannot do it alone. Mayors stand ready to work with Congress so that together we can meet the very real challenges the country is facing with its crumbling infrastructure," said USCM Vice President Rochester Hills (MI) Mayor Bryan Barnett.

The report illustrates that one solution cities can no longer afford to overlook is opening up their procurement processes so that managers have the freedom to consider all suitable project materials. As part of the report's findings, Burton (MI) Mayor Paula Zelenko shared that "allowing the bidding of different pipe materials, not only forced suppliers to sharpen their pencils, it ended up saving the city of Burton over $2 million by using PVC pipe…on our $25 million water main replacement project."

"Cities spent $360 billion on water and sewer pipes from 1993 to 2017. Mayors want efficient solutions that make the best use of limited resources without compromising the performance or safety of their water systems. This report sheds critical light on a viable alternative that should be explored. A strong national infrastructure is crucial if our country is to remain economically competitive with the rest of the world," said USCM CEO and Executive Director Tom Cochran.

Key Findings of the report include:

- The average cost to replace drinking water pipes in an “open competition” system is 26% per mile less expensive than in “closed competition” regions;
- For stormwater, the savings from “open competition” averages 39% per mile;
- Nationally, “open competition” could save an estimated $20.5 billion for drinking water and $22.3 billion for storm water in pipe material costs alone over the next 10 years.

See here for the full report.

Copyright © 2026 Bond Case Briefs | bondcasebriefs.com