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Houston Needs to Borrow ‘Billions,’ Mayoral Frontrunner Says.

- **Whitmire cites ‘fragile’ water-treatment plant, leaky network**
- **Democrat leads main rival Jackson Lee 34% to 31% in new poll**

The leading candidate to become Houston’s next mayor said the fourth-largest US city needs a multibillion-dollar bond issue to overhaul a brittle water system.

John Whitmire, the longest-serving Texas state senator, said one of his main priorities as mayor would be repairing and upgrading a decrepit water-distribution network that springs as many as 1,000 leaks a day. As recently as November, a widespread systemic failure prompted a citywide boil order that shut schools, disrupted hospital operations and closed restaurants.

A crucial water-treatment plant on the city’s east side that failed last year “is very, very fragile,” Whitmire said in an interview at Bloomberg’s Houston office. “We have to do a major infrastructure program, not only water but certainly streets. Broken water mains are all over town so we’ve got to document that, we’ve got to convince the public that we’re using their money wisely and then we’ve got to ask them for more.”

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By Joe Carroll

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