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Sewer Rates Soar as Private Companies Buy Up Local Water Systems.

New state laws have unleashed dozens of buyout attempts.

For residents in some Pennsylvania communities, flushing the toilet has suddenly gotten much more expensive.

In many townships and counties, rates have spiked as private water companies have bought up wastewater systems from local governments.

The new push to privatize sewer services follows the passage of a state law in 2016 that allows the dollar value of water systems to include not just pipes and plants but market factors such as their worth to the community, allowing them to be sold at much higher prices.

Community groups and municipal leaders say that law, an example of “fair market value” legislation, has unleashed dozens of buyout attempts as private companies have offered tens of millions of dollars for local water systems. Pennsylvania’s municipalities have been at the forefront of the national movement, though an ongoing court case could slow the state’s momentum.

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Route Fifty

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