

Executive Director, National Association of Water Companies

Posted: February 19, 2010 10:14 AM

Addressing America's Aging Infrastructure

I read Bob Herbert's recent column (*New York Times*, Feb. 16) with great interest. Appropriately asking "What's Wrong with Us?," Herbert ignited an often-overlooked, but necessary dialogue about our nation's aging infrastructure. As the comments well illustrate, (there were 309 of them before the forum closed to additional reactions) our national priorities often overlook serious issues right under our nose, or in case of our drinking and waste water infrastructure, literally under our feet. I couldn't agree more that our infrastructure needs attention and needs it now, but I'll take it one step further - all of us need to play an active role in getting the proverbial ball rolling. One way to do so is through effective engagement between the public and private sectors. Public-private partnerships combine the security of government oversight with the extensive benefits of private company project management. (See <http://www.nawc.org/about/private-water-providers.html> for more information.)

Like Governor Rendell, the National Association of Water Companies (NAWC) is actively engaged in identifying ways to address our infrastructure woes. Through a partnership with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Let's Rebuild America program, the NAWC will be detailing some of our recommendations for addressing the country's water infrastructure needs. Among those are adjusting the tax code to expand the use and availability of tax-exempt bonds for water projects that improve public and environmental health; and developing an infrastructure bank that would supplement loan funds for necessary infrastructure projects while also increasing private capital investment (an idea that Governor Rendell has also supported).

Collectively working towards the implementation of meaningful infrastructure solutions can be the finest example of the American entrepreneurial spirit in generations. Herbert's promotion of infrastructure investment, repair and construction is commendable - now it is up to all of us to actively pursue the steps necessary to achieve real progress for America's future.