

***Joint Resolution Supporting a LIHEAP-Equivalent to Assist Low-Income Drinking Water Utility Ratepayers***

WHEREAS, The National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC) has previously noted that rates for drinking water systems have risen, commensurate with the rising costs of meeting ongoing challenges relative to the costly remediation of aging infrastructure, meeting ever more stringent Safe Drinking Water Act requirements, and the added costs of enhanced security measures; *and*

WHEREAS, NARUC has noted the nation-wide, 20-year estimated capital needs for drinking water system infrastructure needs, which range from to \$150.9 billion (*U.S. EPA Infrastructure Needs Study*, 1999) to one trillion dollars (*Water Infrastructure Network Report*, 2000); *and*

WHEREAS, NARUC has previously supported drinking water affordability efforts, particularly in its support of a broad range of realistic solutions to this rising cost industry; *and*

WHEREAS, The National Drinking Water Advisory Council recently recommended providing assistance directly to those in need as one of several strategies to help water systems and their ratepayers address the rising costs of high quality drinking water; *and*

WHEREAS, A one-day forum was held in Washington, D.C. on November 3, 2003 to initiate a broader discussion of developing an assistance program for water ratepayers, similar to the Low-Income Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP); *and*

WHEREAS, The forum was sponsored by the National Association of Water Companies, the American Water Works Association, the Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies, the Consumer Federation of America and the National Consumer Law Center; *and*

WHEREAS, NARUC consistently has resolved to support LIHEAP funding for energy ratepayers; *and*

WHEREAS, A new program designed to assist water utility ratepayers will likely result in similar significant and beneficial outcomes, including: assistance with bill payment obligations; reduction of service terminations (including the potential for concurrent termination of wastewater service, either of which results in housing unfit for habitation); and encouraging conservation; *and*

WHEREAS, The timely development of an effective assistance program for low-income ratepayers of drinking water systems, such as LIHEAP for energy ratepayers, is in the overall public interest; *now therefore be it*

RESOLVED, That the Board of Directors of the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC), convened at its Winter Committee Meeting in Washington, D.C., conceptually supports and encourages the timely development of effective assistance programs for low-income ratepayers of drinking water systems; *and be it further*

RESOLVED, That NARUC, through its Committee on Water and its Committee on Consumer Affairs, work closely to develop effective programs to assist low-income water utility ratepayers, considering, but not limited to LIHEAP as a potential model.

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*Sponsored by the Committee on Water and the Committee on Consumer Affairs*

*Adopted by the NARUC Board of Directors March 10, 2004*