



**Kanawha County Commission**  
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## **Media Release**

**For Immediate Release**

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### **Kanawha County Commission Opposes West Virginia American Water Rate Increase**

Charleston, W.Va. – The Kanawha County Commission is expressing strong opposition to the latest rate increase approved for West Virginia American Water, calling it another burden on residents already struggling with the rising cost of everyday necessities.

Effective March 1, 2026, residential water customers using 3,000 gallons per month will see their average bill increase by approximately \$6 per month, while residential wastewater customers using the same amount will see their average bill increase by approximately \$7 per month. In May 2025, the utility requested a 27.9% rate hike that would have increased its net annual water and wastewater revenue by \$60.5 million. The PSC ultimately approved pre-allocation revenue increases of **\$28.176 million for water** and **\$4.537 million for wastewater**.

Commission President Ben Salango said the public has every right to question whether ratepayers are being asked to shoulder too much.

“The so-called Distribution System Improvement surcharge has reportedly funded more than \$322 million in capital investments since 2016, yet water lost through leaks, line issues, meter problems, and other system losses increased by 6.1%, and boil water advisories increased by 42% from 2021 through 2024,” Salango said. “That is deeply troubling and it raises real questions about whether ratepayers are getting the results they were promised. At the same time, from 2014 to 2024, West Virginia American Water’s net income grew from just under \$8.5 million to more than \$40.8 million, while its number of active customers increased by only 1.6%. That is more than enough reason to question whether customers are being asked to carry too much of the burden.

Commissioner Lance Wheeler said the impact of repeated increases is real, even when each one is presented as modest.

“This is about real people and real household budgets,” Wheeler said. “For many families, another increase of six dollars here and seven dollars there is not minor. It adds up quickly, especially for seniors on fixed incomes and households already stretched thin. Reliable water service matters, but so does affordability, and our residents deserve both. Over the last twenty years, people have watched their water bills more than double, and at some point, ratepayers are justified in saying enough is enough. When every bill keeps going up, people notice, and they are tired of being told to just absorb it.”

Commissioner Natalie Tennant said future increases should not be considered without stronger proof that the utility is delivering real results.

“No one disputes the need to maintain water and wastewater infrastructure, but if families are expected to pay more year after year, the PSC should demand stronger performance standards before approving future increases,” Tennant added. “West Virginia American Water should have to show real, measurable improvements in reliability, water loss reduction, and service quality before coming back to ratepayers for more. At a time when so many people are already under financial pressure, every added cost matters, and the public should not be asked to simply accept higher bills without stronger accountability.”

The Kanawha County Commission believes utility service must be both dependable and affordable, and that future increases should be tied to transparency, measurable performance, and fairness to the ratepayers who have no choice but to pay these bills.