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MAJORITY OF VOTERS IN 64 OF 67 COUNTIES SHOW SUPPORT FOR CRUCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT

NEARLY TWO-THIRDS OF VOTERS APPROVE \$400 MILLION FOR WATER AND SEWER UPGRADES THAT WILL SUPPORT 12,000 PENNSYLVANIA JOBS

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Just for Kids

HARRISBURG – Governor Edward G. Rendell today hailed the broad support Pennsylvania’s voters expressed on Election Day for a clean water referendum that he said will support thousands of jobs and enable communities across the state to make critical repairs and upgrades to their water and sewer systems.

A majority of voters in 64 of Pennsylvania’s 67 counties chose to approve the \$400 million ballot question, which the Governor said shows that the public understands the need to invest in important infrastructure improvements for the good of the economy and Pennsylvania’s quality of life. Nearly two-thirds of voters statewide supported the ballot question yesterday.

“Pennsylvanians from different parts of the state and from all party affiliations overwhelmingly chose to create new jobs and make an important down payment on our economic future and the quality of life in our communities,” said the Governor. “Our water and sewer systems—as well as other critical components of our infrastructure—are in need of substantial investments to ensure quality, dependable services that will position our economy to grow.

“Our citizens and businesses expect a reliable supply of water, dependable sewage service and safe roads and bridges. If we cannot provide these services, you can be sure citizens will leave and employers will close their doors.”

With 99.6 percent of precincts reporting, the referendum received more than 2.8 million “yes” votes and 1.7 million “no” votes.

The \$400 million bond issue will allow the Pennsylvania Infrastructure Investment Authority, or PENNVEST, to award grants and loans for water treatment systems and pipelines. The money will be available for municipally owned drinking water and wastewater systems in every corner of the state, large or small, urban or rural.

The funding will be available to the 183 publicly owned water systems in Pennsylvania that are facing federal mandates to reduce nutrient pollution in the Susquehanna and Potomac river basins and downstream in the Chesapeake Bay.

The Sustainable Infrastructure Task Force that Governor Rendell convened early this year released a report last week citing at least \$36.5 billion in capital repairs and upgrade that are needed statewide over the next 20 years to maintain service.

In addition, the task force estimates the commonwealth will need to spend another \$77.1 billion for operation, maintenance and debt service. The report is available online at www.depweb.state.pa.us; click on the “Clean Water referendum” link.

“This is part of a larger national problem,” Governor Rendell said. “Across the country, we’re confronted with a staggering total national infrastructure shortfall of \$1.6 trillion. That unmet need affects the quality of not only roads, bridges, water and sewer systems, it also applies to our airports and rail freight lines—important services that businesses rely on to ship their goods and supplies. If we don’t act quickly, that deficit will continue to grow and we will see our infrastructure fall further into disrepair.

“And, with our nation’s economy slowing, now’s the time to make these investments. These projects will support tens of millions of jobs that are necessary to build these systems and maintain them. And these are good-paying jobs that put steel and concrete in the ground that will pay dividends for our economy and society for decades to come.”

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The Rendell administration is committed to creating a first-rate public education system,

protecting our most vulnerable citizens and continuing economic investment to support our communities and businesses. To find out more about Governor Rendell's initiatives and to sign up for his weekly newsletter, visit www.governor.state.pa.us

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