

Consumers throughout U.S. paying more for water

By Kevin McCoy, USA Today

While most Americans worry about gas and heating oil prices, water rates have surged in the past dozen years, according to a *USA Today* study of 100 municipalities. Prices at least doubled in more than a quarter of the locations and even tripled in a few.

Consumers could easily overlook the steady drip, drip, drip of water rate hikes, yet the cost of this necessity of life has outpaced the percentage increases of some of these other utilities, carving a larger slice of household budgets in the process.

“I don’t know how they expect people to keep paying more for water with the cost of gas and day care and everything else going up,” complains Jacquelyn Moncrief, 60, a Philadelphia homeowner who says the price hikes would force her to make food-or-water decisions. She gathered signatures on a petition opposing a proposed water rate increase in her city this year.

USA Today’s study of residential water rates over the past 12 years for large and small water agencies nationwide found that monthly costs doubled for more in 29 localities. The unique look at costs for a diverse mix of water suppliers representing every state and Washington, D.C. found that a resource long taken for granted will continue to become more costly for millions of Americans. Indeed, rates haven’t crested yet because huge costs to upgrade or repair pipes, reservoirs and treatment plants loom nationwide.

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