

**NRWA Campaign to Save USDA - Week One:** On March 16, the President proposed to eliminate the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Water & Waste Disposal Loan & Grant Program. Immediately following the President's budget proposal, NRWA's Power of an Association Campaign to Restore Rural Water Funding in Congress began. Updates from week one:

- U.S. Representatives Hanabusa (HI) and Katko (NY) circulated a letter in the House to fund USDA ([letter](#)). This will be the main manifestation of Congressional support for USDA.
- North Dakota Rural Water immediately contacted their Senators in support of USDA ([letter](#)). North Dakota Senator John Hoeven chairs the [subcommittee](#) in charge of funding all USDA initiatives. The Bismarck Tribune newspaper featured the issue in a weekend report ([newspaper](#)); see excerpts from the article:

*"Republican Sen. John Hoeven said he was glad to see more military and veterans affairs spending, but wants to make significant changes to the USDA budget... Eric Volk, executive director of the North Dakota Rural Water Systems Association, considers the funds vital.... 'Many of these communities in the backlog simply cannot afford private sector financing at the present terms and rates and will not be able to expand/upgrade for business expansion, housing, new users, etc.,' Volk said in an email."*

- Many state rural water associations initiated grassroots campaigns.
- The President's USDA Secretary-designee walked back proposed cuts. On Thursday, former Georgia Gov. Sonny Perdue said he had no role in the Trump administration's proposal to cut agriculture programs by more than a fifth in the next fiscal year. "I had no input in the budget," Perdue said at his confirmation hearing in the Senate. Perdue testified that he would speak up for farm and rural priorities, adding that he believes President Trump understands many of his supporters are from small towns and farm country.
- Associated Press asks Vermont Rural Water Association ([AP News](#)) for comment and the Albuquerque Journal spends the day with New Mexico Rural Water Association to report on impact ([news](#)).

**NRWA Before Senate on Tuesday:** The U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Fisheries, Water, and Wildlife has invited Arkansas Rural Water Association's Executive Director, Dennis Sternberg, to testify on March 28 regarding [S. 518](#), The Small and Rural Community Clean Water Technical Assistance Act. Sternberg is expected to testify that small and rural communities in all states strongly support S. 518 and urge the committee

and the Senate to pass it as soon as possible to help small communities with operation of their wastewater utilities and compliance with all the federal regulations under the Clean Water Act

**NRWA Regulatory Committee Approves Action to Work with President Trump on Regulatory Reform:** On Friday, the NRWA Regulatory Committee approved two regulatory reform recommendations to send to new EPA Administrator regarding the President's January 30, 2017, "Presidential Executive Order on Reducing Regulation and Controlling Regulatory Costs." Here is more information on the two recommendations:

- One, federally mandated Tier 2 public notices should be eligible for e-reporting or other new and innovative methods for public distribution similar to public notices under EPA's January 3, 2013 policy for "CCR Rule Delivery Options." Adoption of this regulatory reform policy could save small and rural communities millions of dollars in public funding, provide more timely information to the public, and allow for enhanced availability of information to the public by archiving the disclosure material on the internet (as opposed to a one-time mailed notice).
- Two, the mandatory health effects information crafted by EPA as part of the mandatory public notices should be modified. Our concern is the current EPA information is unnecessarily alarming the public regarding the safety of its drinking water.

**EPA Investigating Employees Secretly Opposing Administration:** EPA has one or more open law enforcement investigations into employees using encrypted text messages to coordinate their resistance to the Trump administration, according to EPA's Office of General Counsel. The General Counsel recently wrote in a letter that records regarding employees using the encryption app, Signal, and the agency's efforts to retrieve those records were "part of one or more open law enforcement files" ([EPA letter](#)).

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## **National Rural Water Association**

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