

Rural Water Issues Advisory [1/6/2020]

Having trouble viewing this email? [Click here](#) to view on WaterPro Online or [here](#) for PDF version.

House of Representatives to Vote on PFAS Water Legislation this Week: [H.R. 535](#), a bill that would require EPA to promulgate PFAS drinking water standards, is scheduled to be the first major legislation that the House will take up in 2020 ([House Majority Leader](#)). The bill would also require EPA to declare PFAS hazardous substances under the Superfund law within a year, something that NRWA successfully resisted in 2019 ([NRWA](#)). NRWA was asked by the House staff briefing Members of Congress on the bill for our position. NRWA has urged Congress to include an exemption for small and rural communities from Superfund liability for PFAS in the bill for cases where a small or rural community was not responsible for introducing PFAS into the environment. The legislation, as currently crafted, extends Superfund liability to small and rural water utilities (local governments) that are not responsible for PFAS contamination. Responsible parties should be held accountable for remediation, treatment and providing alternative sources of safe drinking water in such cases. In 2019, the EPA indicated it would designate PFOA and PFOS as hazardous substances under Superfund law, but the agency has not yet done so. NRWA has urged that the House bill be made consistent with Senate-passed bipartisan PFAS legislation (S. 1790) that included many of NRWA's main positions for addressing PFAS in the public's drinking water and sewer effluent: limitation on civil enforcement for local communities, dedicated funding for communities affected, dedicated funding to small communities (i.e. communities with the most need), and funding for unregulated contaminant monitoring for small communities. Also, the Senate-passed bill does not extend Superfund liability to small and rural communities ([NRWA](#)).

H.R. 535's Key PFAS Provisions:

- The EPA must designate PFOA and PFOS as hazardous substances under Superfund law, and has five years to determine whether all PFAS should have the same designation.
- The EPA must craft, at minimum, SDWA standards for PFOA and PFOS in drinking water within two years. This section of the bill would also set a deadline for EPA to consider regulating additional PFAS or classes of PFAS in drinking water.
- EPA must create a program to award grants to communities with water supplies contaminated by PFAS. The funds should be used to pay for implementing water treatment technologies. The EPA must also determine which treatment technologies effectively remove all detectable PFAS from drinking water.
- EPA must list PFAS as hazardous air pollutants under the Clean Air Act.
- SRF funds for emerging contaminants in drinking water should focus on addressing PFAS.
- EPA must require companies that manufacture or process PFAS to submit data that would help the agency evaluate the substances' environmental and health risks.
- EPA must require companies that have manufactured PFAS at any point since 2011 to submit a report to the agency.

U.S. Strike on Iranian Leader Sparks Fears of Major Cyberattack in U.S. ([The Internet](#)).

U.S. Department of Homeland Security Releases (1/4/19) Bulletin on Terror Threat to the U.S.: *"At this time there is no specific, credible threat against the homeland,"* ([National Terrorism Advisory System Bulletin](#)).

Presidential Candidate Sanders Says He'll Enact National Drinking Water Standards for PFAS ([PBS](#)).

Private Water as the “Solution” to Small Water Systems and Noncompliance: *“A harsh reality is that some government utilities in New Jersey have failed in their efforts to provide essential water and sewer services, putting public health at risk... As local governments find themselves challenged to manage their water systems and fund necessary infrastructure investments, the private sector stands ready to help... Newark’s system is currently facing similar serious lead and water quality issues... And small systems are struggling, too. In fact, as drinking-water compliance researcher and university professor Manuel Teodoro testified the state’s water problems are “most prevalent in small water systems...” [Prove] water companies reinvest revenues back into community water systems, which is one of the major factors behind their near perfect water quality record — their infrastructure is simply better and safer because of these investments...”* ([Private Water Industry](#)).

Heavener (OK) City Council Voted to Terminate Contract with Veolia North America: Heavener had been paying Veolia \$200,000 per month to manage its water treatment plant, which was found to have nine primary violations that could affect human health in an August assessment by the Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). Veolia received a \$3 million fine from DEQ which was highly critical of the methods and operations of the plant. DEQ’s findings showed “total negligence and a lack of leadership” from Veolia; *“they have no measuring devices to put chemicals in. They don’t even know what the alarms mean or what the parameters are for what the equipment is measuring.”* “The chemical feed equation for the orthophosphate was used for calculating the potassium permanganate feed rate,” the DEQ report added. Local state senator said, “Veolia does not care. They do not care at all.” Veolia employee implied that state senator is drawing attention to the water quality issues for political gain ([Sustainable Journalism Foundation](#)).

Cities Sell Water Utilities to Pay for Pension Obligations ([Bloomberg](#)).

PBS and NPR Notice that President Trump is Focusing More on Environmental Issues ([NPR](#) & [PBS](#)).

Data from Max Roser, University of Oxford Professor and the Founder of [Our World in Data](#):

- Diarrheal diseases were the third leading cause of death of children younger than 5 in 2017 and are becoming an increasing burden in people aged 70 and over.
- The highest mortality from diarrheal diseases is in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.
- Most childhood cases of diarrhea are caused by rotavirus and most diarrhea cases in older people are caused by shigella bacteria.
- The highest risk factors for development of diarrheal diseases are unsafe drinking water and poor sanitation.
- In recent decades the world has made significant progress in reducing the number of deaths caused by diarrheal diseases. 2.6 million people died from diarrheal diseases back in 1990. Since then, the annual number of deaths from diarrheal diseases fell by around one million.
- Progress against diarrheal deaths among children has been even more substantial: deaths of children under the age of 5 have fallen by two-thirds since 1990.

National Rural Water Association

Contact: Mike Keegan, Policy Analyst <keegan@ruralwater.org>

The National Rural Water Association is the country’s largest public drinking water and sanitation supply organization with over 30,000 members. Safe drinking water and sanitation are generally recognized as the most essential public health, public welfare, and civic necessities.

Reprint Policy: *this report, including any portion, may be distributed publicly without permission or citation.*