

# Rural Water Issues Advisory [2/18/2019]

**NRWA Washington Rally a Success:** Last week's annual rally was one of the best. Numerous state associations reported very positive Congressional briefings and commitments to support NRWA's 2019 agenda. Numerous Members of Congress offered personally to assist with this year's federal funding campaign.

## **Rural Water Included in President's State of the Union Audience:**

- Ramon Knudtson, director of public works for the Jackson County village of Melrose, president of the Wisconsin Rural Water Association and a volunteer with the Melrose Fire Department for the last 38 years, joined Representative Ron Kind at the event. "Wisconsinites like Ramon are the heart of our rural communities," Kind said in a news release. "It is an honor to invite him as a tribute to our first responders and volunteers who work tirelessly to lift our communities higher and move us forward." Knudtson said in the release he is excited to be in Washington fighting for the water industry. "Clean water is something we take for granted, but many communities across our state don't have reliable water sources," he said. "With partnerships between advocacy associations and the government, we can work together to help everyone get this essential need ([newspaper](#))."
- Troy Larson, executive director of the Lewis and Clark Regional Water System, was invited to the President's speech by Senator Mike Rounds (SD). Larson said, "I was reminded, being there, of what is going well in this country... There are a lot of things that are going right -- the jobs, economy. There are things that divide us, but surely we can find things that are good, and come together and work together on those items ([ksfy.com](#))."

**New Executive Order on Buy-American Preferences:** Last week, the President signed Executive Order 13858 – "Strengthening Buy-American Preferences for Infrastructure Projects" – that was published in the Federal Register on February 5th.

**NRWA Drawn into Senate Debate on Confirmation of EPA Administrator Wheeler:** The EPA decision to regulate PFAS under the Safe Drinking Water (or not) has become one of the central issues before the Senate.



## ***Rural Water Utilities Ask EPA Not to Set Drinking Water Limit for PFAS***

February 1, 2019

By Anthony Adragna

The National Rural Water Association is urging senators on the Environment and Public Works Committee to back EPA's plans not to set regulatory limits on two toxic chemicals found in drinking water.

"We wanted you to know that small and rural communities urged the EPA Administrator-nominee to resist setting an EPA regulatory drinking water standard for PFAS, and instead adopt policies to help communities added," the group wrote in an email to Senate offices provided to POLITICO.

The group declined to specify which offices the message went to. In November 2018 [comments](#), the rural utilities urged EPA against setting regulation under the Safe Drinking Water Act and instead implement "alternative federal initiatives" such as funding for treatment and monitoring assistance.

The support for EPA's plans comes as a bipartisan group of senators, led by Jeanne Shaheen (D-N.H.) and Shelley Moore Capito (R-W.Va.), urge the agency in a letter to set "enforceable standards for PFOA and PFOS" and requested regular briefings on the issues.

Despite her concerns, Capito told POLITICO on Thursday she plans to back Andrew Wheeler's nomination to be EPA administrator at a committee vote next week.

**Administrator-nominee Andrew Wheeler Confirmed by Senate Committee:** On February 5th, the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee approved the nomination of Andrew Wheeler as Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency. Wheeler's confirmation was approved by a vote of 11 yes and 10 votes no. The final step will be for his nomination to be considered by the full U.S. Senate.

**Senator Bernie Sanders (VT) Video Advancing the Regulation of PFAS Under the Safe Drinking Water Act** ([Twitter](#)).

**PFAS More Common in U.S. Drinking Water Say New Federal Study:** A recent study by EPA and USGS found some combination of 14 PFAS compounds in all 50 drinking water samples they tested, a dramatic jump from a similar 2016 study that used less sensitive testing methods and found the chemicals in less than 3% of samples ([Science Magazine](#)).

**Congressional Democrats Release “Green New Deal” Proposal:** Last Thursday, sponsors including Representative Ocasio-Cortez (NY) introduced [new climate change legislation](#) to reduce carbon emissions throughout the economy. Presidential hopefuls Senators Gillibrand (NY), Booker (NJ), Harris (CA), Warren (MA), and Sanders (VT) back the plan. The plan includes the following water provisions:

*“It is the duty of the Federal Government to create a Green New Deal— “Green New Deal goals” should be accomplished by guaranteeing universal access to clean water”*

**Local Pittsburgh Activist Blames Lead Violations on Privatization:** On Wednesday, Jennifer Rafanan Kennedy claimed, “[Veolia] is responsible for leaving Pittsburgh with a lead crisis in the first place. From July 2012 to December 2015, Paris-based private water corporation Veolia held a contract with our public water authority, putting PWSA under Veolia’s operational management. Under its management, the chemical used to prevent lead contamination was switched to a cheaper alternative without required Department of Environmental Protection approval. Then, increased levels of lead began leaching into the water. To make matters worse, PWSA laboratory staff — those responsible for testing water quality — was cut in half during Veolia’s contract. We now know what happened when Pittsburgh put a public asset in private, corporate hands: Veolia put its profits over residents’ needs and safety. While residents had to deal with the lead crisis that followed Veolia’s management, Veolia walked away with \$11 million and left thousands of people with unsafe water ([newspaper](#)).”