

EPA Tells Congress It Has \$42 Million for Assisting Small Communities, But None for Rural Water On-Site and Circuit Rider Assistance: Last Tuesday, in a Congressional hearing on the EPA budget, Congressman Simpson (ID) asked EPA about technical assistance for small communities. The EPA Administrator told the House Interior Subcommittee that they have reserved \$42 million for this objective but will not use any of it in a manner that will be helpful at the local level ([video 39:30](#)).

Persuading Congress to Fix EPA Funding: Over the last five fiscal years, the EPA has reduced the level of on-site assistance available to small communities by approximately 75%. To reverse this trend, NRWA has urged the Congressional Committees responsible for the EPA budget to fully fund (\$15 million) the recently enacted Grassroots Rural and Small Community Water Systems Assistance Act (Act) which mandates that EPA use Congressional appropriations in the most helpful manner for small and rural communities. All Members of the House and Senate are urged to contact the key Congressional Committee Chairs to “fix the EPA funding problem by funding the new Act.”

House Chairs: Chairman Rogers (KY) and Chairman Calvert (CA)
Senate Chairs: Chairman Cochran (MS) and Chairwoman Murkowski (AK)

We have not heard that the Committees have been persuaded on the need to change the current process and replace it with the new Act. Please contact us if your Representative or Senator is willing to help. The Chairs need to know that the new law needs to be funded clearly in the EPA's budget or else the funding does not get to your state's rural and small towns.

Wyoming Explicates: After viewing the Congressional hearing on the EPA budget, Wyoming rural water executive director Mark Pepper sent the following memorandum to his Congressional delegation:

The battle line has been drawn by EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy. Without Congress' support to fully implement the overwhelming intent of Congress as expressed in the Grassroots Rural and Small Community Water Systems Assistance Act which requires the EPA to prioritize funding for training and technical assistance (the types of technical assistance that are most beneficial to those communities, based on input from those communities), Wyoming communities will be adversely affected.

Administrator McCarthy, speaking at an appropriations committee hearing, indicated that “the agency has different strategies for using that funding including the new water finance center” i.e., \$22 million to universities and academics to create webinars. Communities have spoken since 2007 when Congress eliminated the earmark for this funding that “boots on the ground” is the preferred delivery vehicle for this training. Since 2007, Congress has provided funding to the EPA with the intent that it be used for boots on the ground. EPA has

interpreted Congressional intent by reducing the boots on the ground portion from a high of \$12.5 million to the current \$4 million and now seeks to eliminate the funding altogether in defiance of Congressional intent. Do we want communities ravaged by floods like the recent Northern Louisiana flooding, or Wright, WY tornadoes of several years ago, the Kaycee, WY flooding a few years ago or Lusk, WY just recently, being required to access a website or webinar or call some eastern university "automated help line" to get help, or rely on experienced, boots on the ground technicians who can provide onsite training and technical assistance, especially during an event?

It is clear that the EPA's intent is directly contradictory to the intent of Congress in passing S. 611. We hope that all of you will encourage Sen. Enzi, Sen. Barrasso and Rep. Lummis to send the message loud and clear to the EPA about Congressional intent by supporting full funding for the unanimously enacted Grassroots Rural and Small Community Water Systems Assistance Act in the EPA funding bill.

Please let me know if you have any questions, need additional information or if we can be of any assistance in this effort.

National Rural Water Association

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