

Senator Inhofe Presses U.S. Senate to Pass Massive Water

Infrastructure Bill: The Oklahoma Senator took to the Senate floor on Wednesday to make the case for passage of the Water Resources Development Act of 2016 ([video of Inhofe Senate speech](#)). Senator Inhofe's speech featured NRWA and Oklahoma Rural Water Association's testimony from an April hearing. Additionally, Senator Inhofe released a support letter, with 31 Republican signers, to the Senate leadership ([letter](#)). NRWA and state associations have been urging Senators to sign the letter.

Members of Congress Urge Lower Lead Action Level: On Thursday, a letter signed by 61 Members of Congress was sent urging the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to lower the federal standard for lead in drinking water so that it better reflects the latest science on the brain-damaging toxin ([letter](#)). The letter calls for reducing that number to 10 parts per billion, in line with World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines for lead contamination. In February, we warned against conflating EPA and WHO standards in a [letter to the City of Ionia, Michigan](#):

"The public should know that the World Health Organization (WHO) and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) standards for lead concentrations in drinking water are measured for different purposes and they should not be conflated. The WHO and EPA standards require different monitoring protocols to make determinations, and the monitoring results for the EPA standards are not what the WHO recommends to determine compliance with their guidelines... It is a fundamental flaw to compare monitoring results for the EPA action level to determine compliance with the WHO provisional guidelines. The WHO guidelines are developed to apply to running water rather than first draw drinking water. The EPA test results are neither designed nor intended to capture lead levels of water ingested, and the EPA action level is not a health-based level, but rather a surrogate of excessive corrosivity in the water."

NRDC Lead Rule Violations Report Causes Alarm: *"Millions of Americans may have drunk lead-contaminated water last year. A new report from the Natural Resources Defense Council says more than 5,000*

water systems around the country had lead violations in 2015" ([MI public radio](#)).

NRWA Cautions Drawing Conclusions from NRDC report: A violation of the federal rule does not necessarily indicate that there is lead in the public's drinking water supply. The vast majority of violations are for procedural requirements under the rule such as proper monitoring techniques (which are very complicated and require local residents to properly follow complicated procedures), missed monitoring samples, late submission of samples, lab errors, etc. None of the monitoring violations correspond to a finding of lead in the drinking water. The monitoring procedures need to be followed correctly. However, the public should not conclude this is an indication of contamination and it should know that a very well-governed drinking water supply with impeccable drinking water quality can find itself in violation of these procedures due to their complexity. Concerned public citizens should find out exactly what was the cause of any violation in their community in order to judge this for themselves.

New WIFIA Policy Includes New Fees: On May 23, EPA released proposed protocols for WIFIA applicants that included a requirement for applicants to pay \$100,000 in fees as part of the initial project proposal. Smaller applicants (populations <25,000) would be required to pay \$25,000 in fees. A separate credit processing fee could run an average of \$200,000 per project application. Comments are due by July 22 ([more](#)).

City of Dubuque (IA) 1926(b) Case Costs \$625,000 in Legal Fees: The controversy is ongoing with suits in state and federal courts. The facts appear to make this a straightforward case in favor of the rural water district. However, the city is continuing litigation thereby increasing the cost for both the district and the city. High legal fees directly decrease public resources available to cities and rural water districts to provide drinking water service. To limit this effect (i.e. litigation), numerous courts have provided rulings designed to show lawyers clearly and unambiguously how the law works.

"The service area of a federally indebted water association is sacrosanct. Every federal court to have interpreted § 1926(b) has concluded that the statute should be liberally interpreted to protect FmHA-indebted rural water associations from municipal encroachment." [North Alamo Water v. City of San Juan, Texas \(1996\)](#)

Smelly, Thick Algae in south Florida Waters Fouls Treasured Beaches and Results in State of Emergency: Lawmakers blame the federal government, saying the algae crisis is fueled by freshwater flows from Lake Okeechobee controlled by the US Army Corps of Engineers. Some residents blamed the governor, saying he hasn't done enough to curb pollution from farms north of the lake ([more](#)).

Crittenden-Livingston County Water District (KY) on Boil Order from Algae: Crews poured a chemical into the Cumberland River to kill the algae ([more](#)).

Man Thought New Zealand Water Treatment Plant Was Meth Lab: A man with a mental illness detained two water workers for three hours while he searched a rural water treatment plant for meth under the mistaken belief it was a *Breaking Bad*-style methamphetamine production operation ([more](#)). The intruder began licking some of the glassware in the facility and snorted chlorine from a sealed sack, evidently under the impression that the residue and powder were methamphetamine.

Severe Water Sewage Pollution Clouds the Olympic Games in Rio: The Brazilian government promised to install eight treatment plants on Rio's polluted rivers. They built just one. They promised to treat 80 percent of the sewage flowing into Guanabara Bay, but are only treating about half ([news video](#)).

National Rural Water Association

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