

Congress Finalizes Appropriations Bills: Congress approved a \$1.1 trillion spending package on Friday that avoids a government shutdown and funds federal agencies through next fall. In a surprise, the House overwhelmingly approved the measure in a 316-113 vote. The Senate later backed the bill 65-33, sending it to President Barack Obama, who signed it into law Friday afternoon. The bill included funding to continue all rural water initiatives (circuit riders, source water, wastewater techs., and EPA technical assistance). NRWA's campaign to have Congress continue the funding next year (Fiscal Year 2017) as already begun. NRWA's annual Rural Water Rally will be held on February 8-10, 2016 in Washington, DC.

Congress Zeros Out WIFIA: Congress included no funding for the new EPA Water Infrastructure and Innovation Act (WIFIA) program. WIFIA allows large and private water communities access to federal water subsidies without having to demonstrate any economic or public health exigency (like the state revolving funds require). WIFIA competes with the SRF for limited EPA water infrastructure subsidies and funding was very tight for water infrastructure in this bill and WIFIA was zeroed out.

Wyoming Rural Water Helps Every State Association: Not every state association has a very close relationship with the Senate EPA funding committee, but Wyoming does and we are grateful for that relationship. Late last week, the Wyoming Association of Rural Water System (WARWS) heard from the Senate that bill (S. 611) to fix the EPA funding problem was passed too late in the Congressional session to be included in the final appropriations bill. Their Senate contacts did indicate a willingness to try and fix the situation next year. Sounds like a plan to end the five-year long situation.

The Significance of S. 611, The Grassroots Rural Water Grassroots Rural and Small Community Water Systems Assistance Act: In addition to fixing the EPA funding program, the bill could very well be the first environmental statute that recognizes civic virtue in federal law and makes the federal government start to help people and communities

provide safe drinking water as an alternative to penalizing them. Senator Heitkamp [statement](#), House Commerce Committee [statement](#), and Senator Wicker [statement](#) on S. 611 passage,

EPA's Fall Regulatory Agenda Includes Two Drinking Water Actions:

Each spring and fall, federal agencies, including EPA, publish a Regulatory Agenda listing the regulatory actions that are underway or planned ([link](#)). The EPA Office of Water is planning action on two drinking water regulatory issues: implementation of the Reduction of Lead in Drinking Water Act (2011) and a review of the Ground Water Rule (GWR). If you have any concerns with these two issues, please contact the [NRWA Regulatory Committee](#).

American Water Takeover in Rural West Virginia: Highlights, *"only one guy can tell you where to find every water pipe in the district... American Water is going to have a hard time finding all these pipes... There's a lot of places up in these hollows that have never been mapped... Before public water, the residents couldn't buy white clothes... We have city water, and we're proud as punch to have city water. It's nice... The large leaks have forced the district into debt... The district has refused to pass costs on to its customers... To American Water, the proposal to take over the district is the customers' best option... If American Water makes the purchase, the rates will go up to \$23.20 a month, a 19 percent increase. On top of that, the debt from the public service district will be pushed off to the customers. They'll pay \$6.98 a month for the next 10 years, which would be a 54.7 percent increase. Those are hard costs for a community that is largely low income ([more](#))."*

Flint, Michigan Issues State of Emergency After Threat of Lead Poisoning: Officials found elevated levels of lead in its drinking water supply following the city change in water source ([more](#)).

Syria's Bombed Water Infrastructure: Water is playing an increasingly important role in the Syrian Civil War. ISIS claims that water facilities were targeted by air strikes from both the Russian Federation and the Combined Joint Task Force ([video](#)).

NRDC Plans To Sue EPA Over Perchlorate Drinking Water Rule

Delay: The Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) is planning to sue EPA over the agency's failure to propose a drinking water standard for the rocket fuel ingredient perchlorate within two years of former Administrator's determination that the agency should do so. EPA announced in February 2011 that it had reconsidered the decision reached by predecessor

Administration. EPA's 2011 decision that perchlorate should be regulated triggered a two-year statutory clock, allowing the agency two years to propose a maximum contaminant level goal (MCLG) for perchlorate by February 2013. Similarly, a statutory deadline of 18 months for a final rule, or maximum contaminant level (MCL), follows the deadline for the MCLG.

Congress Rejects Great Lakes CSO Elimination: The final Congressional budget agreement for Fiscal Year (FY) 2016 rejected a proposal for dischargers to the Great Lakes to eliminate combined sewer overflows (CSO) and the use of blending during wet weather events. The CSO elimination policy provision was included in Senate Appropriations Committee's version of the bill and rejected in the final version signed into law last week.

EPA Releases Draft Phase II Stormwater Rule: EPA released a pre-publication version of the proposed Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) General Permit Remand Rule last week. The proposal will likely be published in the Federal Register before the end of the month with a 75-day public comment period ([more](#)).

A Glass of Clean Drinking Water Contains 10 Million Bacteria: Researchers in Sweden have discovered that our drinking water is to a large extent purified by millions of "good bacteria" found in water pipes and purification plants ([more](#)).

National Rural Water Association

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