

The Power of An Association Ends for 2015

Funding Accomplishments: Congress continued 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.

Fix EPA Funding Accomplishment: NRWA has been advocating for reform of the EPA technical assistance appropriations process since 2008 with the beginning of the anti-earmark efforts in Congress. Initially, Appropriations Subcommittee Chairman Norm Dicks (WA) suggested (to NRWA former Presidents Fred Sheldon and Rodney Tart) that NRWA support reauthorization legislation to solve the problem of EPA funding terminations during long-term Continuing Resolutions and various anti-earmark polices. Many Congressmen and Senators have championed the legislation over the last 7 years including: Wicker MS, Heitkamp ND, Inhofe OK, Matheson UT, Harper MS, Tonko NY and Etheridge NC. In addition to mandating in law a new process for EPA to implement in awarding funding, the recently enacted legislation has also creates a new level of attention in Congress to review EPA funding decisions and understanding the rural water on-site assistance is the most valuable use of EPA appropriations. We plan on urging for funding of the authorization in fiscal year 2017. We also plan to support similar legislation to EPA technical assistance under the Clean Water Act.

Full text of Public Law 114-98: AT THE FIRST SESSION, Begun and held at the City of Washington on Tuesday, the sixth day of January, two thousand and fifteen

To amend the Safe Drinking Water Act to reauthorize technical assistance to small public water systems, and for other purposes.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Grassroots Rural and Small Community Water Systems Assistance Act".

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress finds that—

(1) the Safe Drinking Water Act Amendments of 1996 (Public Law 104–182) authorized technical assistance for small and rural communities to assist those communities in complying with regulations promulgated pursuant to the Safe Drinking Water Act (42 U.S.C. 300f et seq.);

(2) *technical assistance and compliance training—*
(A) *ensures that Federal regulations do not overwhelm the resources of small and rural communities; and*
(B) *provides small and rural communities lacking technical resources with the necessary skills to improve and protect water resources;*
(3) *across the United States, more than 90 percent of the community water systems serve a population of less than 10,000 individuals;*
(4) *small and rural communities have the greatest difficulty providing safe, affordable public drinking water and wastewater services due to limited economies of scale and lack of technical expertise; and*
(5) *in addition to being the main source of compliance assistance, small and rural water technical assistance has been the main source of emergency response assistance in small and rural communities.*

SEC. 3. SENSE OF CONGRESS.

It is the sense of Congress that—

(1) *to assist small and rural communities most effectively, the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency should prioritize the types of technical assistance that are most beneficial to those communities, based on input from those communities; and*
(2) *local support is the key to making Federal assistance initiatives work in small and rural communities to the maximum benefit.*

SEC. 4. FUNDING PRIORITIES.

Section 1442(e) of the Safe Drinking Water Act (42 U.S.C. 300j–1(e)) is amended—

(1) *by designating the first through seventh sentences as paragraphs (1) through (7), respectively;*
(2) *in paragraph (5) (as so designated), by striking “1997 through 2003” and inserting “2015 through 2020”; and*
(3) *by adding at the end the following:*

“(8) NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator may use amounts made available to carry out this section to provide grants or cooperative agreements to nonprofit organizations that provide to small public water systems onsite technical assistance, circuit-rider technical assistance programs, multistate, regional technical assistance programs, onsite and regional training, assistance with implementing source water protection plans, and assistance with implementing monitoring plans, rules, regulations, and water security enhancements.

“(B) PREFERENCE.—To ensure that technical assistance funding is used in a manner that is most beneficial to the small and rural communities of a State, the Administrator shall give preference under this paragraph to nonprofit organizations that, as determined by the Administrator, are the most qualified and experienced in providing training and technical

assistance to small public water systems and that the small community water systems in that State find to be the most beneficial and effective. “(C) LIMITATION.—No grant or cooperative agreement provided or otherwise made available under this section may be used for litigation pursuant to section 1449.”.

Speaker of the House of Representatives

Vice President of the United States and President of the Senate

National Rural Water Association

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