

Congress Passes EPA Funding Reform Bill and Sends to President

Obama: On November 30th, the House of Representatives approved [S. 611](#), “The Grassroots Rural and Small Community Water Systems Assistance Act.” The bill passed the Senate on May 18, 2015 and the National Rural Water Association expects President Obama to sign the bill into law with enthusiasm. Small and rural communities are very grateful to Senators Wicker (MS) and Heitkamp (ND) - and Representatives Harper (MS) and Tonko (NY) for sponsoring the legislation and guiding it to passage in Congress. This is likely the most significant safe drinking water policy enacted since the passage of the Safe Drinking Water Act in 1996.

- **Kirby Mayfield, Executive Director of the Mississippi Rural Water Association**, said, *“Of the hundreds of millions of dollars provided to the EPA by Congress each year, small and rural communities will tell you they get the most benefit from the dollars provided to on-site technical assistance initiatives. Small communities want to ensure quality drinking water and comply with all federal mandates and this new law will provide the technical resources that many small communities lack to meet this mission. It is essential that the person providing technical assistance is an expert in the operation and maintenance of a water supply, not just expert in the rules and regulations. This ensures that assistance providers will be able to educate the community on “how to” comply versus merely explaining that they must comply. These on-site technical experts are called Circuit Riders. This Circuit Rider concept was designed and funded by Congress to allow small communities access to technical expertise that is available to most all larger communities. The Act directs the EPA to target Congressional funding for the most beneficial assistance to small and rural communities. This provision would make implementing the program easier for EPA by providing greater clarity of the intent of the Congress. The ‘preference’ provision in the bill reduces (or eliminates) the subjectivity for EPA in administering technical assistance appropriations.”*
- **Eric Volk, Executive Director of the North Dakota Rural Water Association**, said, *“We are grateful for Senator Heitkamp's help and assistance to the country's over 50,000 small and rural communities that are trying to provide safe and clean water to their citizens every day. The Senator's bill ensures that the most helpful and environmentally beneficial initiatives are available to rural communities. This approach is truly unique in the federal effort to protect the environment because it accomplishes progressive environmental protection with the support of the local communities. Small communities comprise more than 90 percent of*

the water supplies in the country. However, due to a lack of economies of scale, it is often more difficult for small towns to comply with federal rules, afford the latest technology, and have access to technical experts."

- **Pat Scalera, Executive Director of the New York Rural Water Association**, said, *"All the small and rural community members of the New York Rural Water Association Water Systems thank Congressman Tonko for your continued help and assistance. We appreciate your efforts and leadership in cosponsoring the Grassroots Rural and Small Community Water System Assistance Act, your numerous tours of the local communities' water infrastructure this summer, your invitation to Mayor Keegan from Castleton to appear for the committee earlier this year, and your sponsorship of the AQUA Act."*

West Virginia, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Wyoming Rural Water Press for Implementing S. 611 Immediately: These states urged their Senators to include S. 611 in the final FY2016 EPA appropriations bill to correct the current problem that is allowing EPA to use its discretion in keeping most of the Congressional funding from helping rural and small towns (the funding has been cut by over half in the last few years by EPA). Retaining EPA discretion for another year will result in another year of ineffective use of appropriations and curtailment of assistance to small and rural communities.

Montana News Features Rural Water to Highlight Passage of S. 611 ([Billings Gazette](#)).

Private and Large Water System Success on Expanding WIFIA: Congress passed a provision last week to direct additional federal subsidies to the WIFIA program. The new WIFIA program will compete with the state revolving funds for limited EPA water infrastructure dollars. WIFIA is designed to channel the federal water subsidies to large and private water systems. WIFIA supporters are acknowledging Senators Inhofe (OK) and Boxer (CA) - and Representatives Gibbs (OH) and Shuster (PA) for their success ([more](#)).

EPA Proposes New Unregulated Contaminant Monitoring Rule (UCMR 4): The rule will generate data on the occurrence of unregulated contaminants in drinking water, the number of people potentially being exposed, and an estimate of the levels of that exposure. UCMR 4 identifies analytical methods for water system monitoring for a total of 30 contaminants/groups, consisting of ten cyanotoxins/groups, two metals, eight pesticides plus one pesticide manufacturing byproduct,

three brominated haloacetic acid groups of disinfection byproducts, three alcohols, and three semi-volatile organic chemicals ([more](#)).

New England Rural Water States Sourcewater Presentation: Shaun Fielder reports, *"I was lucky enough to join Liz Royer (VRWA source protection specialist) and the following representing rural water yesterday in Lowell, Ma at the New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission (NEIWPC); Marc Cohen (Atlantic States), Andrew Madison (Granite State RW), Susan Breau (Maine RWA), Liz Royer and me (VRWA), Bruce Young (Mass RW), Steve Winkley (NYRWA). The group was asked to present to the NEIWPC Groundwater / Source Water Protection Workgroup on rural water collaborative efforts on groundwater and source protection planning activities with systems, EPA regional contacts and primacy offices. It was an extremely productive meeting and each of the New England Affiliates and New York team members had time to discuss a particular project and included focus points on ongoing and positive communications with EPA regional offices as well as their given primacy contacts. A number of Region 1 contacts attended as well as representatives from the given primacy offices and additionally Deirdre Mason (ASDWA), Lorraine Joubert (URI) and Andrew Stone (American Groundwater Trust). Very impressive to hear presentation information from Marc, Andrew, Susan, Liz, Bruce, and Steve. Kira was quick to point out she has a very working relationship with all New England Affiliates / contacts and there were some very positive discussions about rural water's ability to get various and varied projects completed by pulling various interests together. I am confident NEIWPC and others attending will continue to work with and reach out to rural water for various collaborative efforts/projects connected to source protection planning and beyond."*

Missouri County Indicts City Collector for Theft of Water: Former employee did not bill water to her parents' home while she was the city collector ([more](#)).

Marlin (TX) Without Water After Filters Clog ([more](#)).

Effort to Drill to Earth's Mantle Could Trigger Mega Quake ([more](#)).

U.S. Dep't. of Homeland Security (DHS) Warns of Dorkbot: DHS stated that Dorkbot is a botnet used to steal online payment, participate in distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks, and deliver other types of malware to victims' computers. According to Microsoft, the family of malware used in this botnet "has infected more than one million personal computers in over 190 countries over the course of the past year ([more](#))."

Erie (IL) Under Drinking Water Alert for High Levels of Nitrates:
Residents were urged to drink bottled water while authorities continued to monitor nitrate levels ([more](#)).

Congressmen Craft Letter Opposing Section 428: Prohibition of Combined Sewer Overflows/Blending in the Great Lakes ([letter](#)).

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