

Rural Water Policy Advisory [11/20/2017]

Illinois and Utah Rural Water Associations Stand Up for Small and Rural Communities and Against Allowing State Regulators to Force Consolidation Over Community Objections: On Wednesday, Illinois Rural Water's Executive Director Frank Dunmire and Utah Rural Water's National Director and NRWA Regulatory Committee Chair Paul Fulgham made presentations to the House Energy and Committee Committee staff and the staff of the Committee's Chairman, Representative John Shimkus (IL). The two rural water representatives urged the Chairman to drop the "[mandatory consolidation](#)" provision in the Committee's Safe Drinking Water Act amendment, [HR 3387](#). The rural water team explained that states currently have powers of condemnation, emergency actions, and receivership that provide for the necessary due process for the citizens of any community in question. The Committee's new federal authority for state regulatory agencies circumvents current due process to the detriment of local citizens and governments.

NRWA Launches National Partnership to Train Future Water Workers ([news](#)).

Congressional Appropriations Update: Congress, faced with a December 8 deadline for agreeing on legislation to keep the government funded through fiscal 2018, may buy themselves just enough time to force their final decisions on FY 2018 spending into the Christmas holidays. Passage of a short-term continuing resolution to fund the government until late December is "almost a certainty," according to key Congressman.

Tax Reform Update: Both the House and Senate tax reform proposals repeal advance refunding bonds after 2017. Public water and sewer utilities issued about \$45 billion in advance refunding bonds from 2012 to 2016. According to some bond writers' groups, if advance refunding bonds are repealed, "*municipal bond issuers would be challenged to manage interest rate risks and the cost of borrowing for state and local governments would skyrocket,*" and would "*likely drive many issuers into the swaps and derivatives markets to find new ways to manage debt issued for infrastructure and capital improvement.*" Last week, the U.S. House of Representatives passed their tax bill. The Senate is expected to vote on their version of the tax bill after Thanksgiving.

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt to Testify Before Key House and Senate Committees in the Coming Weeks: Pruitt will appear before the House Energy & Commerce Committee on Dec. 7 and the Senate Environment & Public Works Committee on Jan. 31.

Minnesota Farmers Think Water Quality Accusations Are Misplaced ([news](#)):

- Minnesota water agency finds 73 percent of nitrate pollution in Minnesota River basin comes from agricultural land, 9 percent from municipal wastewater treatment systems, 2 percent from septic systems, and 1 percent from urban runoff.
- University of Minnesota finds for an eight mile stretch of the Mississippi River that runoff from household lawn fertilizers in urban areas was the major source of nitrogen pollution.
- Pet waste produces an equally bad result as livestock waste for urban watersheds, and this may be an issue for rural runoff as well.
- University of Minnesota finds that 76 percent of the phosphorus that goes into city lakes and the Mississippi River in the urban watershed came from pet waste.
- Research shows about 60 percent of overall nitrogen in the Mississippi that creates the Dead Zone can be attributed to farmland runoff.
- Minnesota farmer says, "Our governor has been a little too quick to throw stones at farmers and that's made farmers want to throw stones back."

New York Water System Audit Finds Cyberattack Risks: A state audit found that water and wastewater systems may be vulnerable to cyberattacks from weak passwords, computers connected to water and wastewater networks that are used for personal reasons, vendors disclosing city system information on the internet, old software, and lack of attention to new security threats ([news](#)).

Michigan Forgives \$20 Million More of Flint's Water Debt - Total State and Federal Aid to Flint Now More than \$390 Million: Last week, the Michigan Department of Treasury forgave an additional \$20 million of Flint's debt for water infrastructure. The city borrowed the money between 1999 and 2003 from the state revolving fund to upgrade its water treatment plant. Thousands of Flint residents have been exposed to lead-tainted water ([Detroit News](#)).

Jimmy Kimmel Attacks President Trump for Drinking Foreign Water ([USAToday](#)).

Senate Confirms Brenda Burman as Bureau of Reclamation Commissioner - First Woman to Lead the Bureau ([news](#)).

National Rural Water Association

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The National Rural Water Association is the country's largest public drinking water and sanitation supply organization with over 30,000 members. Safe drinking water and sanitation are generally recognized as the most essential public health, public welfare, and civic necessities.

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