

# Rural Water Policy Advisory [6/11/2018]

**Senate and House Both Advancing Water Development Bills, NRWA Strongly Backing Senate Version:** On May 17, the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee unanimously approved the "America's Water Infrastructure Act of 2018," ([S. 2800](#)). On June 6, the House of Representatives overwhelmingly approved their version of the bill called the "Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2018," ([H.R. 8](#)). The Senate is expected to take up their Committee passed bill in the coming weeks.

NRWA is supporting the Senate version because it includes numerous very beneficial Safe Drinking Water Act and Clean Water Act provisions for rural and small communities. The House version is more narrowly focused on traditional Army Corps of Engineers' water projects.

NRWA is grateful for the very helpful and beneficial water-related provisions in "America's Water Infrastructure Act of 2018," and urge its passage and enactment. The bill was introduced in the Senate on May 8, 2018 by Senate Environment and Public Works Committee Chairman, John Barrasso of Wyoming with support of the Committee's Ranking Senator, Tom Carper of Delaware, Senator Inhofe of Oklahoma and Senator Cardin of Maryland.

The legislation addresses priority small and rural community water issues with the following provisions:

**Section 5004. Technical Assistance for Treatment Works:** Authorizes two new technical assistance provisions under the Clean Water Act. First, it establishes a new initiative to assist small public wastewater treatment systems (those serving not more than 10,000 people) in complying with Clean Water regulations and allows states to use up to two percent of their state Clean Water program to fund an additional technical assistance initiative in their state.

**Section 5010. Water Infrastructure and Workforce Investment:** Provides new federal attention and greater emphasis on the mission for water workforce development. It takes more than 380,000 highly skilled water and wastewater personnel to ensure the public supply of safe drinking water and to protect our lakes, streams and groundwater.

**Section 5011. Sense of Congress Relating to State Revolving Funds (SRFs):** Supports funding for the SRFs. They are essential in funding water infrastructure and projects to comply with federal rules and standards – especially in small and rural communities that may have more difficulty affording public water service due to lack of population density and corresponding lack of economies of scale.

**Section 5012. GAO Study on WIFIA Projects in Small communities, Rural Communities, Disadvantaged Communities, and Tribal Communities:** Provides a helpful GAO review of the federal government's Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act.

**Section 5006. Water Infrastructure Flexibility:** Includes the current affordability analysis used by EPA to make compliance reasonable on ratepayers – especially in economically disadvantaged populations. The bill provides for modification of EPA's current implementation of affordability compliance reviews.

**Committee Amendment:** "Securing Required Funding for Water Infrastructure Now Act" – the SRF WIN Act would amend the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act of 2014 (WIFIA Act of 2014) and allow EPA to provide state infrastructure financing authorities and additional opportunities to receive loans supporting drinking water and clean water state revolving funds by extending WIFIA authorities to states.

**Mark Pepper, Executive Director of Wyoming Association of Rural Water Systems** stated, *"Thank you, Senator Barrasso for consistently listening to and helping rural and small communities and sponsoring the 'America's Water Infrastructure Act of 2018.' Rural America is very appreciative for the help. Small and rural communities have more difficulty affording public wastewater service due to lack of population density and lack of economies of scale. Likewise, we have a much more challenging time complying with our federal Clean Water Act permits and operating complex wastewater treatment systems due to the lack of technical resources in small communities. This bill provides a solution to the lack of technical resources in small communities by providing technical experts, we call them Circuit Riders, in each state to be shared by all small and rural communities who are in need of assistance. A Circuit Rider is a person with expertise in wastewater treatment operation, maintenance, governance and compliance who constantly travels the state to be available on-site to any community in need of assistance."*

During committee consideration of the legislation, Senator Boozman's sponsored legislation, "Securing Required Funding for Water Infrastructure Now (SRF WIN) Act," was added as a provision in the bill. The Boozman legislation combines the best aspects of state revolving funds (SRFs) with the leveraging power of the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA) to make the process easier and more affordable for states to meet their underserved or unmet water infrastructure needs. It will steer WIFIA funding to communities with the greatest economic need and communities that each state thinks are a priority.