

# Rural Water Policy Advisory [10/16/2017]

**NRWA Presses EPA Inspector General to Look at EPA's Public Notice Regulations:** NRWA briefed the EPA Office of Inspector General's (OIG) research team last week regarding their evaluation of the public notification rule promulgated under the Safe Drinking Water Act (comments). Our my main message to the OIG team was the confusing and misleading content of the EPA required public notices. This may not be main inquiry of the OIG evaluation, but I urged them to consider the issue as the most relevant concern for the EPA rules. Michael Daly with the White Cliffs Mutual Domestic Water Users Association in New Mexico commented, *"The EPA version to fill out a CCR starts with 'Is My Water Safe', immediately putting people on the alert. Our small system uses Reverse Osmosis and the TDS of the water we give to our customers currently is less than 100 yet the attached CCR lists 8 "contaminants", including the chlorine we use to be sure the water is safe."*

**Should EPA Start Giving Money to Low-income Customers to Help Pay for Water Bills?:** Maryland Senator, Ben Cardin is considering sponsoring legislation to amend the Safe Drinking Water Act and the Federal Water Pollution Control Act to establish pilot programs that provide funding to water utilities that assist their low-income households in maintaining access to sanitation services and drinking water ([draft legislation](#)). NRWA has been asked to support the legislation which could be introduced soon in the U.S. Senate. In response to last week's request for comments on the legislation from the membership, Brian Mcmanus (board member with Texas Rural Water Association and General Manager of East Rio Hondo Water Supply, Texas) commented, *"My conservative vote is no on EPA financial assistance to help people pay their water bill. We are one of the few industries that welfare hasn't touched on the consumer side yet. It would only get bigger and bloat into bureaucracy from there. I really don't want to have to administer a water stamps program for my utility."*

**Former NRWA President, Jim Dunlap, and Two Other Members of New Mexico's Water Agency Resigned in Protest of State Engineer:** Dunlap, who has been involved in New Mexico water policy for five decades, said having a weak commission would not be in the best interest of New Mexico ([APNews](#)).

**Trump Picks Climate Skeptic to Lead White House Environment Office** ([more](#)).

**Michigan Governor Rick Snyder Denies Misleading the U.S. House of Representatives About his Knowledge of Flint's Legionnaires' Disease Outbreak** ([more](#)).

**City of Alameda, California Warns Customers Not to Make Bodily Contact with Their Tap Water** ([more](#)).

**Jim Gulliford will Return to EPA to Serve as Region 7 Administrator:** ([EPA](#)).

## Privatization Roundup:

- Indonesia's Supreme Court orders the government to protect and manage the supply of water to citizens, hence stop the privatization of the water supply in Indonesia. The verdict was based on the reasoning that Indonesia's water resources need to be controlled and allocated for the public benefit, hence private companies cannot commercialize and monopolize rights over water sources ([more](#)).
- While Terre Haute (IN) is faced with significant financial and operational challenges and needs to modernize wastewater systems to meet environmental standards, selling a public resource to a private corporation is the last thing Terre Haute needs (a [citizen](#)).
- In [testimony](#) before the House of Representatives Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, this year, a representative of the American Water company stated, *"There are currently 56,000 community water systems in the United States, and most are quite small, with 92 percent serving fewer than 10,000 persons... As recently as 2002, 98 percent of wastewater systems were municipally owned. Too many of these systems are failing or are experiencing serious violations posing increased risks to public health... Unfortunately, there are statutory and regulatory hurdles that stand in the way of*

addressing these significant issues... Another example is the lack of private ownership of water and wastewater systems in a number of states... We suggest encouraging partnerships among public water and wastewater systems in communities which currently rely on under-performing or failing water systems.” The corporate water industry is using this narrative to push for a new federal mandatory consolidation mandate of small water systems in the Safe Drinking Water Act (see section 6, [“Mandatory Consolidation”, of H.R. 3387](#), “The Drinking Water System Improvement Act of 2017”). But, this narrative is simply not true of small community water supplies in the nation. In fact on a statistical basis by population, some categories of small water systems have a compliance rate that is better than large metropolitan water systems. An analysis of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s Safe Drinking Water Information Systems (SDWIS) shows that small community water systems (CWS) serving populations between 3,300 to 10,000 persons have a lower rate of violations with the Safe Drinking Water Act than community water systems serving 10,000 – 100,000 persons and community water systems serving more than 100,000 persons.

| EPA SDWIS Compliance Data for FY2017 |              |             |       |
|--------------------------------------|--------------|-------------|-------|
| Population Category                  | 3,300-10,000 | 10,000-100K | >100K |
| CWSs                                 | 5002         | 3,886       | 431   |
| Total number of violations           | 7,064        | 5,577       | 663   |
| Rate of violations per CWSs          | 1.41         | 1.44        | 1.54  |

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**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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