

Rural Water Issues Advisory [10/28/2019]

House Committee to Mark Up Massive Reauthorization of Clean Water SRF (CWSRF), Looks for NRWA's Support: Next week, the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee plans to markup [H.R. 1497](#), the Water Quality Protection and Job Creation Act (Clean Water SRF). The committee stated, "*This bipartisan bill renews the Federal commitment to addressing local water quality challenges by providing an infusion of Federal assistance for the construction, repair, and replacement of the Nation's network of wastewater and stormwater conveyance and treatment facilities. H.R. 1497 significantly increases the amount of Federal assistance made available to States and communities through the successful Clean Water State Revolving Fund program—the primary source of Federal assistance for wastewater infrastructure construction.*" NRWA testified in favor of the bill at the committee's March 7, 2019 hearing ([YouTube](#)). According to the committee's [Fact Sheet](#), the bill:

- Authorizes \$14 billion in Federal grants over five years to capitalize Clean Water SRFs. These funds provide low-interest loans and additional loan subsidizations (e.g., principal forgiveness and negative interest loans) to communities for wastewater infrastructure.
- Authorizes \$1.125 billion for grants to municipalities to capture, treat, or reuse combined and sanitary sewer overflows or stormwater.
- Requires States to set-aside a minimum of 10 percent of annual Clean Water SRF funds to provide grants to communities with affordability concerns.
- Establishes minimum funding set-asides to address the water infrastructure needs of small and rural communities.
- Authorizes States to use a portion of their Clean Water SRF funds to promote workforce development and utility worker training and education programs.

NRWA Participated in EPA's October 25, 2019, Intergovernmental Associations' Regulatory Briefing for the Revised Lead and Copper Rule: EPA detailed the new requirements for small and rural communities under the proposed rule, including the new requirements for water utilities to conduct lead testing in ALL schools and child care facilities (EPA [PPT presentation](#)).

South Dakota Rural Water's Jeremiah Corbin Counters the Environmental Working Group's Latest Report: "*I'm concerned that they may give people the misconception that their water is not safe when, based on drinking-water standards, it is safe,*" Corbin said. "*By cherry-picking what health levels they're going to choose for safe water, it unfairly muddies the conversation.*" Corbin said maintaining safe, high-quality drinking water is an ongoing challenge that is taken extremely seriously by operators of the roughly 300 water systems in the association ([news](#)).

EPA Offers to Help NRWA with New Vulnerability Assessment Federal Mandate: America's Water Infrastructure Act of 2018 (AWIA) Section [2013\(b\)](#) requires community water systems serving populations greater than 3,300 to develop or update their Emergency Response Plans that incorporate findings of their mandated new Risk & Resiliency Assessment (RRA). RRAs must be completed prior to the ERP, and certified to EPA by July 2021 ([NRWA explanation of the RRA mandate](#)). The new mandates were crafted by Congress to "use much of the architecture and policy objectives" from the 2002 mandate to conduct Vulnerability Assessments and Emergency Response Plans. For compliance with the 2002 mandate, most all small communities utilized the [NRWA/ASDWA](#) vulnerability assessment model. Last week, EPA offered to help with the development of a similar effort to make this new mandate as cost-effective and manageable as possible. Additionally, ASDWA has indicated positive initial comment on the concept.

House and Senate Members Announce New Legislation to Assist People Struggling with Rising Water Bills: See Senators Cardin (MD) and Wicker's (MS) October 23, 2019 [announcement](#) regarding the "Low-Income Water Customer Assistance Programs Act of 2019 (S.2687)," which would establish 32 pilot programs nationwide for low-income residents to receive aid in paying their drinking water bills, and an equal number (32) of pilot programs designed to assist low-income residents with paying their wastewater utility bills. In the House of Representatives, Congresswoman Fudge (OH) and Congressman Katko (NY) have introduced companion legislation.

Private Water Company Supported New Senate Legislation to Help with the Small Community Water Problem: Senators Duckworth (IL) and Braun (IN) recently introduced the “Voluntary Water Partnerships for Distressed Communities Act” because *“many community water systems, especially small utilities, struggle to stay in compliance with the Safe Drinking Water Act... putting public health at risk... Partnering with a larger, more experienced utility is a proven way for challenged systems to start down the path of providing the safe, clean and affordable water services their customers deserve ([Private Water Companies' Association](#)).”*

Democratic Presidential Candidates In Opposition to Private Water ([Wateronline.com](#)).

Arizona Town Makes Progress with Removing Radium in Drinking Water and Improving the Internet ([news](#)).

New Hampshire Rural Water’s Board Member Joins Suit Against State Over New PFAS Regulations ([news](#)).

New Federal Government Study Finds Fluoride Can Harm Developing Nervous Systems: The National Toxicology Program’s (NTP) recently released draft report, [the Systematic Review of Fluoride Exposure and Neurodevelopmental and Cognitive Health Effects](#), concludes that fluoride is presumed to be a cognitive neurodevelopmental hazard to humans. This conclusion is based primarily on studies with “higher” levels of fluoride exposure in drinking water. The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine has assembled a committee to review the document before a final document is published. There will be a public meeting of the review committee on November 6, 2019.