

Rural Water Policy Advisory [1/8/2018]

Congress to Extend Fiscal Year 2018 Spending Measure Again: Congressional appropriations committee members are discussing legislation to extend the current January 19 deadline and continue bipartisan negotiations on raising the federal spending caps in the 2011 Budget Control Act. A similar delay occurred last year when Congress agreed to extend the appropriations bill in order to give the new Republican president some say in setting priorities. Those measures were finally enacted in May. Government shutdown brinkmanship centers on many Congressional Democrats' demand that the final deal include an extension of the Obama-era Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) policy.

A Thought on the Lead and Copper Rule (LCR): Today, NRWA President Steve Fletcher will represent NRWA in EPA's formal consultation on "[Federalism](#)" for rewriting the LCR. In response to a national drinking water contamination crisis of chemical toxins in New Orleans' drinking water in the 1970s, Congress reacted by passing new environmental regulations that usurped local governments' authority over the safety of their drinking water with a new federal regulatory authority. Forty years later we witnessed the City of Flint's drinking water crises where the federal regulatory bureaucracy was unable to prevent the crises, unable to tell us what level of lead in drinking water is safe or not safe, and unable to tell us if Flint violated the federal lead rule while delivering alarming amounts of lead to citizens in their water in a situation where nobody is able to assign blame. The confusion of responsibility for Flint is resulting in all Americans subsidizing Flint's water supply to the detriment of funding their own water supplies. As EPA considers revisions to the LCR, many voices are claiming the solution is to further expand federal agency control over local governments (i.e. democracies).

Trump, Water, Environmental Regulations and Rural America: *"[Rural farmers] felt a growing disconnect between how people think in cities and in places like Buckeye (IA), a town of 108. Farmers were too often "shoved aside" during the presidency of Barack Obama, while environmentalists and conservationists, many of whom live nowhere near a farm, took over the national conversation. That feeling lifted when Trump was elected on a promise to reverse much of what Obama had done. 'Now, we have someone we can call,' says a Iowa farmer, riding her horse. Rural areas continue to be Trump's strongest base of support. Nationally, 52 percent of people in rural areas support Trump, compared with 25 percent in urban areas."* Farmers praise the President for rolling back WOTUS, the Clean Water Act rule that the Farm Bureau said could apply to dry creek beds and ditches. On the campaign trail, Trump capitalized on and added to the growing anger and confusion. The rule explicitly states that it does not apply to "puddles," but Trump insisted it did. He called WOTUS "one of the worst rules ever ... a disaster!" If elected, he said he would kill it "on Day One ([The Nonpareilonline](#))."

Minnesota County Commissioners Don't Want Drinking Water Tested for Agricultural Pollution: This month, Brown County Board of Commissioners declined to allow some residents to get their drinking water tested for nitrates and other farm contaminants by the state department of agriculture. Five commissioners — three of whom are farmers — said they were more worried that the agriculture department would use the information to regulate the use of fertilizer. Article generates over 260 comments ([Star Tribune](#)).

EPA Chief Scott Pruitt Rumored for Attorney General ([Reuters](#)).

President Focuses on Infrastructure: At Camp David this weekend, President Trump pushed infrastructure as his top 2018 priority. The White House is expected to release a proposal in mid to late January that will call for a wholesale change in the way the U.S. approaches big infrastructure

projects by moving away from a "project-based" system to a delegated program that gives greater roles to states and private investors.

Great Lakes Wastewater Systems Must Notify Public within Four Hours of Combined Sewer Overflows (CSO): Under a rule the EPA is publishing today, 168 communities will have to notify the public electronically by either posting on the websites or via text, email, or other forms of social media "as soon as possible" — but no more than four hours — after learning of the overflow through monitoring, modeling, or other means ([EPA](#)).

New Trend of Drinking Untreated Water has Experts Concerned: A sales ad features a happy-looking young man dipping into a stream and looking refreshed after a sip of the clear, cool-looking water. "This water is magical," the site explains. And for just \$16 a jug, plus a \$22 deposit, customers can have some of this "live" water. However, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Environmental Protection Agency and various health departments caution that drinkers could also be getting a mouthful of farm waste runoff, septic tank spillover, chemicals and pesticides ([NBC 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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