

The Power of an (Idaho) Association: At the new EPA Administrator's first Congressional hearing on Thursday, Idaho Congressman Mike Simpson made EPA funding for rural water technical assistance a priority issue with the new administrator. Thank you, Idaho Rural Water Association for your advocacy. Only additional Congressional support will solve the EPA technical assistance [problem](#). See video of the exchange between Simpson and Pruitt ([YouTube](#)).

Russia Has Cyberweapon that can Disrupt Water Supplies: New report finds the malware, dubbed CrashOverride, is just the second instance of malware specifically tailored to disrupt or destroy industrial control systems. Hackers allied with the Russian government have devised a cyberweapon that has the potential to be the most disruptive yet against systems that Americans depend on for daily life. Russian government hackers have shown their interest in targeting U.S. energy and other utility systems; the Sandworm cyber-espionage campaign is tied to the Russian government ([news](#)).

5 Charged With Involuntary Manslaughter in Flint Water Crisis: The director of the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) was charged with involuntary manslaughter and misconduct in office, felonies that could lead to as much as 20 years in prison. Dr. Eden Wells, the chief medical executive for the department, was charged with obstruction of justice and lying to a peace officer and could face up to seven years if convicted. The Michigan Attorney General said they had failed to properly alert the public about increases in Legionnaires' cases, allowing the problem to continue and withholding crucial information from residents who might have avoided the contaminated water had they known about it. Court documents claim the HHS director knew of the Legionnaires' outbreak by late January 2015, but did not notify the public for another year. At one point, the documents allege, he said that "he can't save everyone" and that "everyone has to die of something."

Michigan has Allotted \$87 Million to Replace Flint's Tainted Water Pipes, but is It Necessary?: In a conversation last week with a senior federal government official who will be central to drafting the content of the revised Lead and Copper Rule, it was observed that a new federal requirement that drinking water systems remove and replace all existing lead service lines could cost \$30-60 billion dollars nationwide. The official also observed that drinking water systems implementing adequate corrosion control treatment are very effective at reducing at-the-tap lead concentrations, and some communities with no lead service lines have positive tests for lead in their at-the-tap samples.

Congress Starts Appropriations Process: The House Appropriations Committee is beginning to mark up the fiscal year 2018 spending bills, while Republican leaders struggle to devise a budget resolution that would set an overall discretionary spending total for the panel to follow. The first appropriations bill for fiscal year 2018 was advanced last week when the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Subcommittee passed their initial bill ([House Appropriations Committee](#)).

EPA Signals Significant Changes to Obama Risk Management Plans' (RMP) Rule: EPA is suggesting it plans to make significant changes to an Obama-era facility safety rule, arguing in its announcement delaying the regulation for an additional 20 months that the rule is based on "policy preferences" that could vary between administrations. The agency also intends to raise concerns with the rule not cited in industry petitions ([EPA](#)).

U.S. House Could Pass Drinking Water State Revolving Fund Reauthorization by August: Representative John Shimkus (IL), chairman of the House Energy and Commerce's Subcommittee on Environment, said last week that a bill reauthorizing the drinking water law could pass this summer and then be attached to any Senate-passed infrastructure bill to reach the president's desk. NRWA President Steve Fletcher (IL) testified before Shimkus' committee on March 19, detailing all rural water issues with SRFs ([House Committee](#)). The committee is expected to mark-up their bill this Wednesday.

North Dakota's Senator Heitkamp Writes Rural Water Detailing Her Agenda to Save the USDA Water Programs ([letter](#)).

Rural Groups Ask Congress to Protect USDA Rural Development Post: Nearly 600 rural organizations from across the country wrote to Congress voicing their opposition to the Administration's proposal to eliminate the Under Secretary for Rural Development and funding for rural development programs ([news](#)).

NC Newspaper Heading, "Dangerous Lead Levels Found in Water Systems across State": Paper reports that *"more than 6,000 individual exceedances of lead and copper limits since 2005 and those are just the ones that the state knows about."* Paper releases database of individual household sample results and conflates action level with public health level to alarm the public ([news](#)).

Congressional Republicans and Democrats Defend EPA Budget at Agency's First House Hearing ([more](#)).

Rural Water Imbedded - Report from Inside the Beltway: Cover story of Sunday's Washington Post states, *"Rural divide: The political divide between rural and urban America is more cultural than it is economic, rooted in rural residents' deep misgivings about the nation's rapidly changing demographics, their sense that Christianity is under siege and their perception that the federal government caters most to the needs of people in big cities... While urban counties favored Hillary Clinton by 32 percentage points in the 2016 election, rural and small-town voters backed Trump by a 26-point margin, significantly wider than GOP nominee Mitt Romney's 16 points four years earlier. The largest fissures between Americans living in large cities and those in less-dense areas are rooted in misgivings about the country's changing demographics and resentment about perceived biases in federal assistance... Rural residents are nearly three times as likely (42 percent) as people in cities (16 percent) to say that immigrants are a burden on the country (Wash Post)."*