



Protecting Wyoming's Water

Wyoming Association of Rural Water Systems

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The Honorable John Barrasso, MD
United States Senate
307 Dirksen Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Barrasso:

On behalf of all rural and small communities in Wyoming, thank you for consistently listening to and helping rural and small communities by sponsoring and passing the "America's Water Infrastructure Act of 2018." Rural Wyoming is very appreciative of 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.

Your 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 that 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 that needs help.

Your legislation makes significant improvements and modifications to the Clean Water Act, the Safe Drinking Water Act and the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act that will be very beneficial to small and rural communities in Wyoming and every other state. Most water utilities in Wyoming are small; there are 799 public water systems in the state, all regulated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Only 9 of these communities serve populations over 10,000 people.

Small communities want to ensure quality water and compliance – and technical assistance initiatives provide the shared technical resources to do so. This assistance often saves small towns thousands of dollars in compliance costs with federal rules. The legislation addresses priority small and rural community water issues with the following provisions:

- **Section 4103, Technical Assistance for Treatment Works:** This provision includes a version of the "Small and Rural Community Clean Water Technical Assistance Act" which would establish a federal Clean Water Act technical assistance program administered to assist small public wastewater treatment systems in complying with EPA regulations.

- **Section 4201, WIFIA Reauthorization and Innovative Financing for State Loan Funds:** This provision includes a version of the “*Securing Required Funding for Water Infrastructure Now (SRF WIN) Act*” which improves the current Water Infrastructure and Finance Innovation Act (WIFIA) by extending WIFIA-type authorities to your state revolving loan funds (SRFs). State SRFs are preferred to the status quo WIFIA program because the SRFs, by statute, target federal water funding to communities with the most need or merit (i.e. the combination of compliance burden, water rates, and local consumers’ ability to pay for the projects) and allow states to choose projects to meet state-determined needs. All sizes of communities are eligible for SRF funding.
- **Title II, Drinking Water System Improvement:** This title is a version of the House of Representatives’ Energy and Commerce Committee’s Safe Drinking Water Act reauthorization, H.R. 3387 (Drinking Water System Improvement Act of 2017). Enhancing drinking water quality in small communities is more of a resource issue than a regulatory problem. Most small community non-compliance with the Safe Drinking Water Act and Clean Water Act can be quickly remedied by on-site technical assistance and education. This title improves the current SDWA by targeting funding to disadvantaged communities and small communities with minimum set-asides, and prioritization of projects with the greatest environmental and economic need. Moreover, it extends maximum loan duration up to 40 years. The bill also increases to 35 percent of the amount of additional subsidization to include forgiveness of principal that can be used in disadvantaged communities.
- **Section 4304, Water Infrastructure and Workforce Investment:** New federal attention and emphasis on water workforce development is proposed in this section. 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. A college degree is of value but is not required. This career does require a great deal of training and experience. The apprenticeship model would be a welcome enterprise for the water worker universe.

Thank you, Senator, for sponsoring and passing the bill and we look forward to seeing it signed into law by President Trump. Please contact me if I can be of any assistance.

Sincerely,



Mark Pepper
Executive Director