

Table of Contents

U.S. Senate	Date: Tuesday, March 28, 2017
Committee on Environment and Public Works	Washington, D.C.
STATEMENT OF:	PAGE:
THE HONORABLE ROGER WICKER, A UNITED STATES SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI	3
THE HONORABLE DEBRA FISCHER, A UNITED STATES SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF NEBRASKA	7
THE HONORABLE JOHN BOOZMAN, A UNITED STATES SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF ARKANSAS	12
THE HONORABLE TAMMY DUCKWORTH, A UNITED STATES SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF ILLINOIS	18
THE HONORABLE KIRSTEN GILLIBRAND, A UNITED STATES SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF NEW YORK	21
RICHARD GRAY, MAYOR, CITY OF LANCASTER, PENNSYLVANIA	25
DENNIS STERNBERG, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ARKANSAS RURAL WATER ASSOCIATION	30
ERIN M. CROTTY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, AUDUBON NEW YORK	36

LEGISLATIVE HEARING ON: S. 518, A BILL TO AMEND THE FEDERAL
WATER POLLUTION CONTROL ACT TO PROVIDE FOR TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE
FOR SMALL TREATMENT WORKS; S. 692, THE WATER INFRASTRUCTURE
FLEXIBILITY ACT OF 2017 AND S. 675, THE LONG ISLAND SOUND
RESTORATION AND STEWARDSHIP ACT

TUESDAY, MARCH 28, 2017

U.S. SENATE

Committee on Environment and Public Works

Subcommittee on Fisheries, Water and Wildlife

Washington, D.C.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:15 p.m. in
room 406, Dirksen Senate Building, the Honorable John Boozman
[chairman of the subcommittee] presiding.

Present: Senators Boozman, Wicker, Fischer, Duckworth,
Cardin and Gillibrand.

Senator Boozman. The meeting will come to order.

I would like to welcome everyone to today's legislative hearing. We are reviewing three bills, S. 518, the Small and Rural Community Clean Water Technical Assistance Act, the Water Infrastructure Flexibility Act of 2017 and S. 675, the Long Island Sound Restoration and Stewardship Act.

The sponsors of these bills also sit on the Armed Services Committee which has a conflicting meeting in just a few minutes. What we would like to do is let them go first. I am going to recognize Senator Wicker, Senator Fischer and Senator Gillibrand and let them make remarks about their legislation.

Then I will give my opening statement followed by Ranking Member Duckworth. We will then proceed to the testimony.

Would you like to start, Roger?

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE ROGER WICKER, A UNITED STATES SENATOR
FROM THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI

Senator Wicker. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for accommodating our schedule this afternoon.

I am at this moment here to talk about S. 518, which deals with sewer systems that serve fewer than 10,000 people.

Frankly, in the United States of America, some 80 percent of public sewer systems are in that category.

Many of these small communities often face significant challenges in complying with federal rules and it is also costly.

S. 518 provides some relief in the form of technical assistance and training to assist small communities in securing the necessary technical expertise to improve and protect their water resources.

Specifically, under my legislation, the EPA Administrator would have authority to direct funding to non-profit organizations to provide on-site assistance, regional training, assistance with implementation of monitoring plans, rules and regulations to ensure compliance with the Clean Water Act.

I might mention to my colleagues that a similar initiative has already been in effect with regard to effective implementation of the Safe Drinking Water Act. This would add the Clean Water Act to that. I believe this program would share

the same success for rural community wastewater systems.

The bill would also one other thing. It would allow States to use up to two percent of their Clean Water State Revolving Loan Fund for technical assistance for these small systems.

My appreciation goes out to our colleague, Senator Heitkamp, for being the lead Democrat on this bill and to members of this committee, Senators Barrasso, Boozman and Capito, for also signing on as co-sponsors. There is a great need for this. I urge its adoption at the appropriate time.

I thank my colleagues for their attention.

[The prepared statement of Senator Wicker follows:]

Senator Boozman. Thank you. We thank the Senator from Mississippi.

Now we will go to our Senator from Nebraska.

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE DEBRA FISCHER, A UNITED STATES
SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF NEBRASKA

Senator Fischer. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and also the Ranking Member for holding this hearing today. I thank the committee for coordinating the schedule with today's conflicting Armed Services Committee briefing.

I would also like to thank Mayor Gray for providing testimony today on behalf of the U.S. Conference of Mayors and the other witnesses for their willingness to share their time and experience with our subcommittee.

Last week, I introduced S. 692, the Water Infrastructure Flexibility Act with Senators Brown, Cardin, Boozman, Portman, Blunt and Booker. Our bipartisan legislation would provide local communities with increased flexibility when complying with Clean Water Act requirements for updates to water infrastructure projects.

The bill would also give communities more independence as they prioritize and plan for wastewater and stormwater investments. More than 700 local communities across the Country face mandates from the EPA to comply with Clean Water Act requirements.

In my home State of Nebraska, the City of Omaha was hit with a \$2 billion unfunded federal mandate from the EPA. Specifically, Omaha was required to update its combined sewer

overflow system.

We all want clean and safe drinking water but an expensive, one-size fits all approach handed down from Washington does not work.

According to the U.S. Conference of Mayors, on average, municipalities spend between six to seven cents of every tax dollar on water and sewer systems. This makes water infrastructure the third largest expense for cities after education and emergency personnel.

Local communities forced to comply with these costly mandates have no choice but to pass these costs on to families through higher utility bills. For example, in 2014, the city council in Omaha, Nebraska approved a sewer rate increase of approximately 45 percent over several years. This hurts the most vulnerable in the community, our low and fixed income families.

The Water Infrastructure Flexibility Act would allow municipalities to prioritize investments in storm and waste water projects needed for CWA compliance. It would also establish an Office of Municipal Ombudsman at the EPA to assist cities in complying with federal environmental laws.

Most importantly, our bill requires the EPA to revise this regulation to make it more affordable.

The U.S. Conference of Mayors, the National Association of

Counties, the National League of Cities and the National Association of Clean Water Agencies have all endorsed this bill. I am grateful for their support. I would ask unanimous consent that their letters of support be included in the record.

Senator Boozman. Without objection.

[The referenced information follows:]

Senator Fischer. Thank you, sir.

We all want clean water. Our bill helps us work toward that important goal without unnecessarily burdening families along the way.

I would like to thank my colleagues for joining me on this legislation and I look forward to working with each of you as we move forward to address our Nation's infrastructure needs.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Senator Fischer follows:]

Senator Boozman. Thank you very much, Senator Fischer.

We are going to have our opening statements. I will speak first and then our Ranking Member. If Senator Gillibrand pops in, we will pause because she also needs to be at Armed Services.

The reality now is we all have two or three things going on at the same time. There is a lot going on up here.

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE JOHN BOOZMAN, A UNITED STATES SENATOR
FROM THE STATE OF ARKANSAS

Senator Boozman. As a former member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and now part of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, I understand the importance of infrastructure investment.

During my time in Congress, I have been a constant advocate for water resources development and infrastructure. In the 114th Congress, the Senate EPW and full Congress demonstrated its commitment to infrastructure with the bipartisan, I emphasize bipartisan, passage of two bills, the Water Infrastructure Improvement for the Nation Act as well as the comprehensive highway bill, the Fixing America Surface Transportation Act. I was very pleased to support both.

Passing these pieces of legislation was a major step forward. However, there is still more to be done. I am looking forward to the opportunities we will have to make investments in the 115th Congress. I am really looking forward to working with Senator Duckworth in that capacity.

Like many Americans, I am encouraged by the Trump Administration's commitment to improving our Nation's crumbling infrastructure, following the example set by President Dwight Eisenhower in establishment of the interstate highway system.

It is clear that infrastructure investment boots our

economy, creates immediate jobs and produces decades of economic opportunity.

Unfortunately, since the President signed the Federal Aid to Highway Act of 1956, we have relied on a fix as fail approach to our Nation's infrastructure. Not only is the fix as fail approach more expensive, increasingly causing delays to commerce, but it also poses a risk to public safety.

The United States faces a multi-hundred billion dollar shortfall for water infrastructure investments which includes drinking water, sewer and water supply projects. This shortage is reflected in the American Society of Civil Engineers' overall grade for America's infrastructure as a D-plus.

America is now at a crossroads. We need to address our aging infrastructure but it comes with a cost. We have options that can help fund infrastructure projects so we can get shovels in the ground and projects underway.

The Federal Government has provided funding to establish revolving loan grant programs administered by the States as well as resources through the Water Infrastructure Finance Innovation Act.

This program leverages small investments to make sure that taxpayers get the most bang for the buck. However, solving America's infrastructure crisis is not just about funding. We also need to make investing in infrastructure more affordable.

Once investments have been made, smaller communities may need technical assistance with operation and maintenance. Of course planning is needed to help us make wise investments.

One example of Congress providing these tools is the Water Supply Cost Savings Act which I co-sponsored and was included in another bill. This legislation provides a technical clearinghouse that encourages cost effective approaches to bring affordable, quality drinking water to rural America which is so very important.

With this bill, we help to ensure that rural States, such as Arkansas, are not overburdened by major new infrastructure investments. The three bills we are reviewing today provide further examples of how we can help communities meet the requirements of the Clean Water Act.

We all want clean water but communities are being asked to do more and more. These requirements are all coming at once where there are mandates to update treatment plants, to address nutrients, mandates to control stormwater flows or mandates to address combined or sanitary sewer overflows. There are lots of unfunded mandates.

The question is not whether communities are going to address these issues. However, we have to recognize there are limits to how fast a community can act, particularly when many clean water mandates can cost hundreds of millions and in some

cases, billions of dollars.

Senator Fischer's bill, the Water Infrastructure Flexibility Act of 2017, helps address this issue. This legislation, which I am also co-sponsoring, allows communities to put all their Clean Water Act obligations into a single plan and then implement that plan over time, making the investments that provide the greatest environmental and economic benefits first instead of trying to do everything at once.

Another issue is whether a community has the technical capability to meet Clean Water Act mandates. Many wastewater treatment systems operated by small and rural communities have few staff and limited resources.

As a result, they may lack the expertise to maintain compliance with Clean Water Act requirements and may not be able to afford a full-time technical expert. On-site technical assistance and education offered by circuit riders provides a cost effective way to address this issue.

Senator Wicker's bill, the Small and Rural Community Clean Water Technical Assistance Act addresses this issue by authorizing funding for rural water circuit riders.

Under this bill, of which I am also a co-sponsor, funding for this program can come directly from EPA. In addition the bill also allows States to set aside a part of their State revolving loan fund's money for this purpose.

Finally, we want to know the wisest investments we can make to achieve clean water. Senator Gillibrand's bill, the Long Island Sound Restoration and Stewardship Act addresses this issue for the waters of Long Island.

This bill reauthorizes two existing programs that helped New York and Connecticut develop, adapt and implement the Long Island Sound Comprehensive Conservation and Management bill and helped restore the coastal habitat.

I look forward to hearing the views of our witnesses on these bills and how we can promote flexibility, technical assistance and good planning.

[The prepared statement of Senator Boozman follows:]

Senator Boozman. I now recognize Senator Duckworth for an opening statement.

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE TAMMY DUCKWORTH, A UNITED STATES
SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF ILLINOIS

Senator Duckworth. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you to Chairman Boozman for convening this important conversation and to all of our witnesses for joining us today. Welcome to rainy D.C. where the cherry blossoms are not as in full bloom as we would like but still lovely nonetheless.

I believe that infrastructure issues broadly can be a bright spot of bipartisanship for this subcommittee and our full committee as well as Congress. Whether it is rural areas or urban areas, coastal or plains States, communities across this Country are grappling with finding ways to provide infrastructure that is strong and safe.

Not only are there challenges all across this Country, these challenges are often similar. They also have a pressing need to prioritize this issue now all across the Nation.

As we discuss three bills before us today, I would like to highlight that each bill in its own way addresses issues I hear so many communities in Illinois complaining about. They provide communities with the capacity they need to take care of themselves and their residents.

The Water Infrastructure Flexibility Act will supply local governments the technical capacity so that they may better

comply with requirements under the Clean Water Act. The Small and Rural Community Clean Water Technical Assistance Act has a similar objective. In this bill we provide small communities the workforce capacity they would not otherwise have access to.

Finally, everyone should support programs like the Long Island Sound Restoration and Stewardship Act which would give the region the capacity to coordinate restoration activities with other federal activities.

Clearly, capacity can come in different shapes and sizes. However, regardless of the form, the returns are substantial and in some cases, critical.

I am excited to work with all of you and hope that our hearing today will be the first of many to come where we will come together, hear ideas and consider solutions to these very urgent issues.

Thank you again, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Senator Duckworth follows:]

Senator Boozman. Thank you.

Senator Gillibrand.

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE KIRSTEN GILLIBRAND, A UNITED STATES
SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF NEW YORK

Senator Gillibrand. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Madam Ranking Member.

I am very grateful for this subcommittee hearing today and for including my bill, the Long Island Sound Restoration and Stewardship Act, on the agenda today.

I would like to welcome my friend, Erin Crotty, and thank her for her testimony today. We went to high school together. Erin is the Executive Director of Audubon New York and a former commissioner of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.

Audubon New York has been an important partner in protecting the Long Island Sound. I am so pleased Erin could be here today to give the perspective of those who work on the ground every day and see the benefits of federal investment in restoring the Sound.

Thank you, Erin, for being here and for traveling from New York.

Mr. Chairman, the legislation I re-introduced this Congress, along with Senators Blumenthal, Schumer and Murphy is identical to the bills that have unanimously passed this committee in previous Congresses.

It has strong bipartisan support from the New York and

Connecticut delegations in the House, as well as from the local communities in the Long Island Sound Watershed.

Long Island Sound is an estuary of national significance that contributes up to \$37 billion to the regional economy each year. To protect this resource, my legislation would reauthorize through fiscal year 2023 our federal commitment to helping our communities in New York and Connecticut restore and maintain the health of Long Island Sound and its ecosystems.

For every \$1 in federal funds appropriated to the Long Island Sound program, an \$87 is leveraged from other sources. We have seen the results from our investment. Federal funding has already helped to significantly reduce by millions of pounds the amounts of nitrogen entering the Sound from sewage treatment plants.

We have protected thousands of acres of habitat land, but there is still work to be done to reduce pollution and protect vital ecosystems in and around the Sound for millions of my constituents who live and work near it and want to enjoy its natural resources for recreation.

I thank the committee for once again considering this legislation. I hope we can move quickly through Congress so we can get it to the President's desk.

Thank you both.

[The prepared statement of Senator Gillibrand follows:]

Senator Boozman. Thank you.

Let us now go to our witnesses. Mr. Gray.

STATEMENT OF RICHARD GRAY, MAYOR, CITY OF LANCASTER,
PENNSYLVANIA

Mayor Gray. Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee.

My name is Rick Gray and I am the Mayor of the City of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, a city of 60,000 people in seven square miles.

The Water Infrastructure Flexibility Act is a positive step in acknowledging that we need to approach our water and wastewater issues in a more practical and cost effective manner.

Attached to my testimony is a letter signed by the U.S. Conference of Mayors, the National League of Cities and the National Association of Counties that encourages all Senators to co-sponsor this legislation.

During intense rain storms, due to impervious services and our combined stormwater/wastewater system, millions of gallons of untreated wastewater can be caused to overflow into our river.

The city has been proactively implementing a comprehensive stormwater program to improve water quality, meet regulatory compliance and address stormwater challenges using gray as well as green infrastructure.

Since 1999, the City of Lancaster has been implementing a State-approved, long term control plan investing \$80 million in

gray infrastructure improvements. We are close to meeting the 85 percent captured goal set forth by EPA.

If Lancaster used gray infrastructure, this remaining 15 percent would cost an estimated \$300 million.

After more than a year of evaluation and many public input sessions, Lancaster determined that a \$140 million investment in green infrastructure with other gray system improvements over the next 25 years could accomplish the remaining compliance for the system.

In 2011, Lancaster adopted a green infrastructure program establishing an integrated stormwater management to reduce combined sewage overflows in a more cost effective and environmentally sustainable manner.

Lancaster has completed 45 green infrastructure programs at a cost of over \$10 million. This has resulted in the capture of 45 million gallons of stormwater annually. EPA Region 3 and EPA Headquarters have lauded our program and held Lancaster up as a model for other cities to replicate.

Yet EPA's Enforcement Division continues aggressive actions including threats of civil penalties in the seven figure range to press us to use costly gray technology rather than allowing Lancaster time to implement a more sustainable green solution.

Lancaster's story illustrates that a new direction for EPA is necessary, one that will allow cities the flexibility to opt

for more sustainable and resilient green infrastructure technologies.

Since the beginning of Lancaster's implementation we have had significant rate increases. I believe they were 130 percent since 2003 plus a stormwater fee. Rate increases for our customers disproportionately affect the disadvantaged populations of our community.

This is a community in which 29 percent of our households have incomes of less than \$20,000. These programs are shared by many cities.

The Mayors' message to Congress is that renewing public water infrastructure and delivering safe water is becoming less affordable. Sewer and stormwater mandates are expensive and may not address the highest local environmental or public health concerns of a city.

I would like to call your attention to four important points of the Nation's mayors. One, codify EPA's integrated planning and permitting policy. Integrating planning should be designed to allow cities to develop comprehensive plans and establish a plan of investment over time to reach these goals.

Two is achieving long term control of stormwater through permits. We urge Congress to create a path of long term goals that exist through the permitting process rather than by way of consent decrees.

Third is renewed congressional support for exercising flexibility in existing clean water law.

Fourth is eliminating civil fines in consent decrees for local governments that develop integrated plans and make reasonable progress in improving their waters.

I wish to thank the committee for this opportunity to speak before you today.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mayor Gray follows:]

Senator Boozman. Thank you very much for your testimony.

I did not go to school with him but I do want to especially thank Dennis Sternberg for being here from Greenbrier, Arkansas. I have had the opportunity to work with him for the last several years. He does a tremendous job.

As of January 2017, Mr. Sternberg has spent 38 years in the water and wastewater industry in Arkansas with 29 of those years spent working in almost field positions as a field rep, EPA program manager, USDA circuit rider and wastewater technician trainer.

He and his Rural Water Association staff are committed to the future of rural communities by assisting utilities throughout the State with their many challenges that rural, small utilities continue to face.

He holds the highest in water and wastewater licenses in Arkansas. In 2006, he received the Executive Director of the Year Award from the National Rural Association. In 2009, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and National Rural Water Association recognized Dennis for leadership in emergency response preparations.

Thank you for many, many years of service to the people of Arkansas. Now you can give your testimony.

STATEMENT OF DENNIS STERNBERG, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ARKANSAS
RURAL WATER ASSOCIATION

Mr. Sternberg. Thank you, Senator.

Good afternoon Chairman Boozman and members of the Committee. It is an honor to be here and we are grateful that you have included a voice for rural America at this hearing.

My name is Dennis Sternberg, and I am the Executive Director of the Arkansas Rural Water Association, a non-profit association of 563 small and rural community water utilities in Arkansas.

I am also a representative of the National Rural Water Association which has over 31,000 community members. Our mission is to enhance drinking water and wastewater service, safety, compliance and quality in small and rural America.

My main message to the committee today is that the small and rural communities in all States strongly support S. 518, the Small and Rural Community Clean Water Technical Assistance Act.

We urge the committee and the Senate to pass it as soon as possible to help small communities with the operation of their wastewater utilities and compliance with all the federal regulations under the Clean Water Act.

We are very appreciative of Senators Wicker and Heitkamp's sponsorship of the bill and I will explain why the legislation is helpful and merits enactment.

Most all of our Country's sewer systems or wastewater utilities are small. Approximately 80 percent of the Country's approximately 16,000 wastewater utilities serve a population of fewer than 10,000 persons.

In Arkansas, for example, approximately 340 of the 370 community wastewater utilities serve small communities. In Illinois, it is approximately 700 of 800; in Maryland, it is 130 of 170; and in Mississippi, it is approximately 270 of 300.

Small and rural communities have more difficulty affording public wastewater service due to lack of population density and lack of economies of scale. This challenge is compounded by the fact that rural communities have lower average median household incomes and often have higher rates of poverty.

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. While we have fewer resources, we are regulated in the exact same manner as a large community.

S. 518 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 who 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 in need of assistance.

For these circuit riders to be effective and helpful, they must be available to travel directly to any given community to work specifically with a community's leaders with unique treatment and personally educate that operator, mayor, or other local officials on how to solve their problems.

They have to be available when the community needs the help which can be nights, winters, after natural disasters, and weekends. Also, they must be non-regulatory to gain the trust of the local communities.

The small town of Kensett, Arkansas provides a good recent example of technical assistance. Last year, the Kensett Waterworks called for help with their sewer systems concerning a problem with their activated sludge plant. The plant had suddenly become upset and out of compliance.

A rural water circuit rider was dispatched and traveled to the community, inspected the plant and their records and noticed a decline in the sample results over a four month period. The circuit rider disassembled the activated sludge return pump and line to clean them and found the cause of the problem. The line had been blocked by biological growth.

After clearing the lines and pumps, the circuit rider recommended they feed some artificial enzymes and food

supplements to try to jump-start the recovery of the activated sludge plant.

In addition to providing the technical solution to their problem, this assistance saved the community approximately \$1,000 per day in potential fines. If enacted and appropriated, S. 518 would allow for thousands in similar assistance events each year throughout the Nation.

Senator Wicker had a similar bill pass about a year ago to provide small communities with circuit rider assistance for the Safe Drinking Water Act and drinking water treatment utilities.

However, we have not been able to have that legislation, Public Law 114-98, specifically cited in the EPA appropriations bill which is preventing that technical assistance funding from reaching rural Arkansas, Mississippi, Illinois, Maryland and other States.

Any assistance you can provide to correct these issues with the EPA Appropriations Subcommittee is greatly appreciated. This committee is very important to rural and small town America. We are grateful for the opportunity to testify today and grateful for the numerous opportunities this committee has provided rural America to testify and to be included in crafting of the federal water and environmental legislation.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Sternberg follows:]

Senator Boozman. Thank you very much.

Ms. Crotty, you are welcome to go now. I will give you some extra time if you would like to tell some stories about Senator Gillibrand.

STATEMENT OF ERIN M. CROTTY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, AUDUBON NEW YORK

Ms. Crotty. I think I will take a pass on that, Senator.

Good afternoon Chairman Boozman, Ranking Member Duckworth, and Senator Gillibrand. I really want to thank you for allowing me to testify on Senate Bill 675 the Long Island Sound Restoration and Stewardship Act.

I would especially like to thank Senator Gillibrand from my home State for being a champion for our shared environment and for sponsoring this critically important legislation.

My name is Erin Crotty. I am the Executive Director of Audubon New York and also Vice President of the National Audubon Society. Audubon's mission is to protect birds, their habitats, and the places they need to survive throughout their entire life cycle.

For decades Audubon's united network of members, volunteers, chapters, national, New York State, and Connecticut offices have worked hard to protect and restore Long Island Sound and its watershed. Here is why.

Long Island Sound is a globally significant ecosystem for birds, fish and other wildlife. It is a 1,320 square mile estuary of the Atlantic Ocean and borders 600 miles of New York and Connecticut.

The Sound supports 54 important bird areas which are the

most important places for birds, 14 of which are globally important.

It is an estuary of national significance. The Sound is home to one of the most important tern nesting sites on earth, Great Gull Island, with approximately 10,000 pairs of Common Terns and more than 1,000 pairs of the federally endangered Roseate Tern.

The Sound supports over 1,200 species of invertebrates, 170 species of fish, and dozens of species of migratory birds, including the federally threatened Piping Plover and Red Knot. Twenty-three million people, 7 percent of the total U.S. population, live within 50 miles of the Sound and it is five miles from the heart of the Country's most populated city, New York. The Sound generates an impressive \$9.4 billion annually to the regional economy.

It is for these reasons that Audubon strongly supports the Long Island Sound Restoration and Stewardship Act. The Act authorizes the Long Island Sound program in the Environmental Protection Agency and the Long Island Stewardship Act through fiscal year 2023.

The Act authorizes up to \$40 million annually for grants to support the Sound's Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan and up to \$25 million annually to procure and enhance sites within the Sound's watershed and adds critical functions to the

Long Island Sound Study Office including to study the environmental impacts on the Sound's source waters.

The Act is a common sense approach to modern estuary protection and helps meet the Federal Government's share of the funding needed. The federal funding, which is often the driver for projects moving forward, will be leveraged with other federal, State, local, and private investment.

On average, the estuaries of the National Estuaries Program, of which the Long Island Sound Study is one, raises \$18 for every \$1 provided by the EPA. That is a significant and meaningful leverage ratio.

While the health of the Sound has improved, threats do continue. For nearly 30 years, this comprehensive effort has resulted in measurable improvement to the Sound's health and Audubon has been there every step of the way.

Water quality has improved, habitat has been restored, and open spaces protected which has resulted in the Sound teaming with wildlife and people. Nitrogen is being reduced from wastewater treatment plants, habitat is being restored, millions of people are being engaged and dead zones are shrinking. Bald eagles are nesting and species are returning like the Humpback whales and bluefish yet the health of the Sound is still threatened. Today's threats are more diffuse and challenging.

A changing climate, extreme weather events, acidification,

nitrogen discharges from stormwater and septics, aging and broken infrastructure, brown tide, invasive species, development pressure and rising sea levels are literally squeezing out the habitat for birds and other wildlife. These are the challenges facing the Sound today. The collaborative and integrated effort enabled by the Act is more important than ever.

The Sound's CCMP was updated in 2015 and the vision is one of clean water that is protected and nourished, abundant and diverse wildlife; flourishing commercial fisheries; accessible harbors; and a public that protects and sustains the ecosystem.

The Act helps us, governments at all levels, the private sector, non-governmental organizations, including Audubon, and the public reach that vision.

The Nation's National Estuaries Program faces an uncertain future. The Trump Administration has reportedly proposed to eliminate funding for EPA's Categorical Grants which Audubon believes includes the 28 estuaries of the NEP, including the Sound.

The NEP is a cost effective, non-regulatory program that harnesses the power of on-the-ground stakeholders by providing them with a structure to collaborate, develop and implement a long-term plan to guide their efforts.

Over one-half of our Country's population lives within 100 miles of coasts and more and more people are moving there. With

a leverage ratio of 18 to 1 and \$4.2 billion leveraged with an investment of \$230 million in EPA grants, the NEP has proven to be a highly effective and efficient program.

Audubon strongly encourages Congress to resist this short-sighted effort to cut the program.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to testify today. Help us make a difference for the birds, the wildlife and the people that rely on the Sound for survival and a high quality of life by taking action on Senate Bill 675, the Long Island Sound Restoration and Stewardship Act.

Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Crotty follows:]

Senator Boozman. Thank you, Ms. Crotty.

Senator Gillibrand.

Senator Gillibrand. Thank you so much, Ms. Crotty, for your testimony. I have two basic questions.

Can you tell the committee, for the record, what would be the environmental and economic impact if Congress no longer funded the Long Island Sound Program? Can you more fully describe the level of coordination between the Federal Government, State, local and NGO stakeholders to carry out projects to restore and protect the Sound?

I ask this because that leverage is really significant. I think it is important for the Federal Government to now it is not just federal dollars at stake here. It is a lot of other dollars that come because of federal leadership.

Ms. Crotty. Thank you, Senator.

The Long Island Sound Study Program of EPA really is the lynchpin or the catalyst, if you will, of pulling all of the parties working on restoring Long Island Sound which is a bi-State effort and involves all of the levels of government and certainly not-for-profit organizations and municipalities.

It really is that glue that holds us together and working towards a common vision in the CCMPs in order to protect and restore this estuary of national significance. The money we find from the Long Island Sound Program is often the catalyst

for a project to move forward.

All of these programs are co-funded. It is very rare when you have a wastewater treatment plant upgrade, a habitat restoration project, or an open space project that is not leveraged with private and public dollars.

It would be extremely detrimental to the progress we have made and certainly all of the challenges that we have left if the reauthorization did not happen.

Senator Gillibrand. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you so much.

Ms. Crotty. Thank you.

Senator Boozman. Thank you.

I am going to ask Mr. Gray a question. I would like you to respond also, Ms. Crotty. It is going to be about green.

Mayor Gray, according to your testimony, it costs the City of Lancaster \$80 million to capture 85 percent of flows from your combined sewers. I assume capturing the remaining 15 percent is difficult because the technology gets difficult to do that.

In many cases in Arkansas, we have situations where that happens but there is really no measurable difference as far as the streams and things like that. That little extra is costing you so much, \$300 million.

To me it is a classic example of the diminishing returns

that you get at some point. I do not really know where that is but at some point, you get really diminishing returns.

It also points out the need to try new approaches, which you are doing. You have gotten a lot of credit for it and yet, you really do not get credit for it as far as enforcement. Tell me about the barriers you faced to using the green infrastructure approach.

Ms. Crotty, again, the potential of having a portion of \$300 million in green is a lot of green and if that would or would not be beneficial, trying to figure out the commonsense approach with these things.

Yes, sir.

Mayor Gray. Senator, all politics are local. In Lancaster, we have combined green infrastructure with park improvement, intersection improvement, and private alley improvement. We funded through the State Revolving Fund loan we got many demonstration projects on the local level.

In doing that, when we do a park, for example, and put in green infrastructure, we have one park with six basketball courts, all with drain fields underneath them, all of which are impervious.

When we do those types of projects, the people of Lancaster know the neighborhood, know the improvements that have been done in their neighborhood. It becomes a cost effective problem at a

certain point. How are we going to pay for this?

After three or four years of doing improvements, green infrastructure improvements with visible side benefits, the public was ready and we imposed a stormwater fee. You would think the people would be up in arms with a stormwater fee, but people related to it as visible improvements in their neighborhoods, their parks, their streets, their intersections, and the rain gardens we have put all over the city.

They have seen visible improvements which with infrastructure very often you cannot see what is being done. When it came time to impose a stormwater fee to pay for a lot of this, two people showed up at the city council to oppose it, lawyers for the two biggest parking lots in the city. The residents were ready to say, we are willing to do our part.

Through a little creative politics over a three or four year period, the people in the community actually bought into it and were actually agreeable to doing it.

The problem with the gray infrastructure, the cost of the gray infrastructure, is they want it done now. It must be done immediately. You have to put in a holding tank or put in two holding tanks at \$300 million.

As compared to green infrastructure which takes time to put in and time for its benefits to be realized, a sense of urgency I think is one of the biggest problem, the sense of urgency

imposed upon us.

Senator Boozman. Ms. Crotty.

Ms. Crotty. Thank you, Senator.

I think that example is quite fascinating. I think what we have found all across New York State, particularly on Long Island, is when you have the ability to be flexible and devise local smart solutions from the start, that is sort of the best outcome, being able to integrate green infrastructure, resiliency, design into clean water infrastructure projects funded by multiple parties including State and Federal Government.

That is the best solution, making sure the various regulatory statutes build into regulations the kind of flexibility that localities need in order to comply.

You just described a real quality of life issue. The green infrastructure and resiliency components built into some of these local projects become a real important part of the quality of life for their community.

It makes it nicer, more accessible and also improves the environment. You definitely have had two big wins there in terms of your public policy priorities.

Senator Boozman. Senator Duckworth.

Senator Duckworth. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Sternberg, I understand the Trump Administration has

promised eliminating a key program for rural communities, the USDA's Water and Waste Disposal Loan and Grant Program.

I have 776 small and rural communities throughout my State that serve 1.4 million customers. I am hearing from them that without this program, their ability to guarantee public sewer and wastewater systems would be impaired.

Can you share with me how important a program like the Water and Waste Disposal Loan and Grant Program is to small and rural communities?

Mr. Sternberg. Thank you, Senator. That is a very good question.

It is the same thing in Arkansas. We have 700 community water systems and 370 wastewater systems. The major of the systems in Arkansas and in most States are those 31,000 community water systems that represent national rural water across the Nation.

Small, rural communities go the USDA Loan Grant Program for their improvements or upgrades. It has happened for over 70 years. That is the best program out there. It does not cost the Federal Government anything because they pay it back. They have less than one-half percent delinquency rate.

That type of program we need. That is infrastructure that we are going to continually need. For that system to go out on the private market is not going to be the same cost back to the

ratepayers. It will be exorbitant.

There is only so much money in the State Revolving Loan Fund. In Arkansas, the majority of the larger systems are accessing that, so the competition is going to be greater.

Senator Duckworth. Am I correct in saying the bills we are discussing today might be supplemental but certainly cannot take over the function of this program?

Mr. Sternberg. Exactly. No.

Senator Duckworth. Thank you.

Can you share with me why technical assistance is also very important to rural communities and how technical assistance authorized in the Wicker bill would work in partnership with other programs?

Mr. Sternberg. The technical assistance for the small and rural communities with populations of 10,000 and under are the ones that do not have the expertise like Little Rock or Jonesboro where they have engineers, chemists and different ones available and the licensed operator at the highest level to troubleshoot those types of things.

They rely on Rural Water. Rural Water has technicians out there right now through USDA. We have some contracts through EPA and some through our State SRF on the drinking water side but they are designated to certain systems.

There will be no duplication and it is needed, drastically

needed. We train more water and wastewater operators in the State of Arkansas than any other agency, including the primacy agency.

Senator Duckworth. I tried getting bifocals and it looked like this table under me was curved and they made me dizzy, so excuse me while I do this.

Senator Boozman. I am an optometrist so I will give you some help.

Senator Duckworth. Would you, please, because I got my first pair and they just drive me crazy.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask unanimous consent to enter into the record three letters in support of the USDA Water and Waste Disposal Loan and Grant Program as well as the Water Infrastructure Flexibility Act.

Senator Boozman. Without objection.

[The referenced information follows:]

Senator Duckworth. Thank you so much.

As I mentioned in my opening remarks, while I support all these bills, I think there is always room for improvement. For example, I would like to work with all of you in making sure many of the medium-sized communities in my State are not left out.

Mayor Gray, as you discussed, the City of Lancaster has long been working on a green infrastructure plan since 2011. Can you share some of the primary and secondary benefits of using green infrastructure to address stormwater and wastewater projects?

Mayor Gray. Certainly, Senator.

There have been three categories of improvements which we have seen. Environmental benefits include recharging groundwater, protecting and improving water quality, providing natural stormwater management, mitigating the heat island effect and reducing energy use. All come from our green infrastructure programs.

Social benefits include increasing recreational opportunities, improving health through cleaner air and water, and improved psychological well being. Plus, it makes the city more attractive to the kind of people you want in the city, the millennials.

A week does not go by that I am not stopped by some younger

person who tells me they like that the city prides itself on being a green city. They like it, they want to move there, they want to be a part of it.

Finally, economic benefits include the future cost of stormwater management as well as increasing property values. I will give you an example. We have a lot of private alleys in Lancaster which are just what they sound like, alleys owned by the property owners on both sides.

We put green alley in one of these private alleys. Within a week, the price of a house for sale on the green alley had gone up \$2,500. There was a small notation in the newspaper advertising it as being on "the green alley." They are all over the city now.

We find people who are willing to part with their own money, \$500 a property owner to put in these types of things. There are so many benefits that come from it that are past stormwater benefits. Again, environmental, social and economic benefits all come from green infrastructure.

Senator Duckworth. Thank you. I always find my mayors to be the most practical problem solvers. I think you just demonstrated that in your answer.

Mayor Gray. We have to be, Senator.

Senator Duckworth. You do.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator Boozman. Thank you.

The Senator from Nebraska.

Senator Fischer. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mayor Gray, since you just received that great compliment from the Ranking Member, I have a question for you.

In your written testimony, you mentioned that the current EPA enforcement approach employs aggressive actions, rigid methods and threats of large civil penalties. What are the consequences for such an approach for small cities like Lancaster?

Mayor Gray. We have one consent decree we operate under already from the American with Disabilities Act. My predecessor was sued and rightfully so and they entered a consent decree.

Now, for everything we do with our sidewalks and streets, we have to go to Philadelphia and get approval from a federal judge who is very nice and sympathetic but it has taken it out of our hands. The practical things have been taken out of our hands.

We met with the EPA and the EPA region was very supportive of our green infrastructure program. Politically, I sold it to people that we have to get ahead of the EPA. We want to do this before they make us do things. We want to be positive about it. We want to be friends with the EPA. We want them to be our friends.

They supported us for years. If you went to a Chesapeake Bay meeting and they were having a slide show, there would always be a couple of slides the EPA would put up about Lancaster. This is what we want, this is what we want you to do.

A few years ago enforcement got involved. I am not sure the region and the enforcement division talk to each other because it was a totally different attitude. It was you have to do this, it must be done now.

Negotiations have proceeded which are quite costly to the city, between experts and lawyers and whatnot. We spent a lot of money at this point talking with the EPA. We are trying to work out something with them.

For example, to impose a civil penalty, I am not going to pay it. I was in private practice. I represented clients who had civil penalties that came off their bottom line. Where does the civil penalty of the City of Lancaster come from but out of the taxpayers' pocket?

We are negotiating with them right now. It sort of shocked us when they came with that kind of attitude because we thought we had a different relationship with them.

Senator Fischer. My apologies, I gave your city the Nebraska pronunciation of Lancaster instead of Lancaster.

Mayor Gray. You are forgiven, Senator.

Senator Fischer. How would provisions within the Water Infrastructure Flexibility Act help to give cities and counties a stronger seat at the table in addressing really the long term strategic water infrastructure needs that you have?

You said you are working with the EPA and redevelop a good working relationship. Do you think my bill would help with that?

Mayor Gray. Absolutely. We think we do have a good working relationship with one part of the EPA. We support their goals and we support their efforts.

The bill has a couple of things in it that would really be different and change the culture. The permitting, to have permitting and including this all in permitting rather than doing it through a consent decree, there is a 20 year decree, do it for five years. Look at it, work together on it, and see what your abilities are.

There are provisions in there for affordability. Again, the City of Lancaster has 29 percent of its families that have \$20,000 or less income. Affordability is an important issue to us. We want to do it, we want to do it right. How much can we afford for it?

Finally, the provision that you take out the civil penalties is another approach. Why not use that money to implement green infrastructure or gray infrastructure? Why

penalize us for what has happened in the past?

Senator Fischer. You mentioned how under the current structure, cities are faced with the need to increase rates on the families with a regressive impact on those most in need or on a fixed income. I am concerned about that as well. A two percent increase on utility rates means a great deal for working families.

Can you explain why the median household income benchmark is harmful to low and fixed income families?

Mayor Gray. Not really.

Senator Fischer. Do any other panel members wish to address that? Mr. Sternberg?

Mr. Sternberg. The median household income for that city or area, you still have the lower income people who will be affected through it all. There are similar situations in Arkansas. We have that same problem.

You set it at the median household income so the lower income people are still getting hit harder because of their poverty or whatever the case might be. It is something that really needs a hard look.

Mayor Gray. Again, 29 percent of our population makes less than \$20,000 per year. We estimated that if you did that, it would be around \$700 a year for water. Right now in the City of Lancaster, you might pay \$200 a year. It would impact the low

and moderate income people. That would be a substantial increase.

Senator Fischer. That is what we are trying to address in the bill to make sure those people who have low or fixed incomes are not hurt disproportionately by the legislation we are putting forward and that we are still able to make sure that those water infrastructure projects are going to get done.

Thank you very much.

Mayor Gray. Thank you, Senator.

Senator Fischer. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator Boozman. Senator Cardin.

Senator Cardin. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to thank the witnesses for being here and share a story.

I was helping a local councilman from Baltimore City during the elections this year, so I did something that Senators do not normally do, I was actually knocking door to door for this candidate. I was not on the ballot in Baltimore City.

There was a theme from every person who answered the door. That was the water bills in Baltimore and the affordability to the ratepayers.

I recognized that we have a real problem. That is you have an aging water system that needs desperate repair that costs a lot of money that has yet to be fully implemented. Certainly in

Baltimore City it has not been fully implemented. Then you have the pressure on the ratepayers that is beyond their affordability.

We have to figure out a way to deal with this real problem in our community. I thank the Chairman for his leadership on this issue. The two of us have joined together on several initiatives to try to deal with water issues.

I am working now with Senators Fischer and Brown on a bill that we think would make the water more affordable by an integrated planning process. We require a lot of different plans. If we integrated together, we can save considerable resources for local governments and, by the way, take a more holistic approach rather than taking a look at the specific program.

We are hoping that will help deal with some of the affordability issues. We are also looking at the median income standard for federal assistance. It is interesting, Mr. Chairman, and I want to share this with you.

I got the numbers for Baltimore City because I found they were kind of shocking. Baltimore City shows a relatively high median income but when you take a look at the poverty levels in Baltimore City, we have a large number of people, the majority of people fall under the poverty level. The median income as the sole indicator for eligibility we think is just the wrong

approach.

We are offering those suggestions in an effort to try to make the federal partnership more available, particularly to those jurisdictions that are really being stressed on their ratepayers.

I wanted to make those comments. Thank you for the hearing. I would be happy to hear from any of our witnesses who would like to respond as to other ways we can provide relief to the ratepayers and still get the type of modernization of our water infrastructure that is desperately needed, particularly in our older communities.

Mr. Sternberg. I would just say, Senator, as far as rural and small communities, that is why what Senator Duckworth brought up about the USDA Loan and Grant Program is so important.

If it goes away, water rates will go up in rural and small America. There is no way around it. You hit on the larger systems having the same issue. I think Congress is doing something with WIFA program, funding some of that for the larger utilities. I think that is great.

You are right. You have to be more inventive in how we go about doing things like that but the USDA Loan and Grant Program for infrastructure is vital. It has to be put back in place.

Senator Cardin. I strongly support the initiative that

came out of this committee. It does not take away though the need for us to have the basic partnership programs that help in regard to water infrastructure.

Ms. Crotty. Thank you, Senator.

I was going to mention that under the Clean Water State Revolving Fund Model, having the ability to give hardship grants and grants to municipalities can be very critical at times.

The other thing I was going to mention was Senator Boozman raised the prospect of having a large infrastructure investment coming out of Congress potentially this year. Having clean water as part of that larger bill I think would be a tremendous investment in not only jobs and our economy but also a benefit to our environment and our high quality of life.

We do find in New York State sometimes the grant money that does not have to be paid back, it is not the low interest, long term loan but actual grants, having the flexibility to be able to give out the grant money becomes a real critical point for some of the projects in rural parts of the State and less affluent areas.

Senator Cardin. I would point out that you are correct. There is strong interest in an infrastructure bill. It is going to be more difficult to deliver than just interest because we have to come together.

What we urge you all to do, and you will have our support,

is whatever infrastructure bill comes out, make sure water is included in it. That is not a foregone conclusion because the interest on things you see more visibly like roads and bridges usually gets more attention than things that are underground that people do not see and recognize the desperate need.

Mr. Chairman, I have a letter from Baltimore City. I would ask it be made a part of our record.

Senator Boozman. Without objection.

[The referenced information follows:]

Senator Boozman. Let me ask Mr. Sternberg a couple quick questions. Can you explain to the committee why circuit riders that actually come to your community are more effective in providing technical assistance than other approaches like webinars?

Has EPA shifted support for rural technical assistance away from the circuit riders in your experience?

Mr. Sternberg. The first part of it is the reason for the circuit riders and the need to go to the local communities versus the webinars, you are one-on-one with that operator, that mayor and that council. You can show them their actual problem with their system.

In a classroom or a webinar, you are just seeing different portions and functions at treatment plants. There is no trust there. You are just reading something or hearing something. When you are with those circuit riders or those circuit riders are there, you build that bond and trust.

The next issue that comes up with that utility, they will call them and call them quickly. That is the reason for the circuit riders. You share that cost across all the small and rural communities. It is not just one engineer coming out there that costs that system to come up with a solution to it. That is where the circuit riders are so vital to this project.

As far as the EPA, we have lost funding through EPA on

water technicians. Back in 2009, we had a groundwater technician fully funded. That runs about \$110,000 a year, I think it was. Our trainer that was fully funded back then. We are subsidizing that by about 45 percent.

We do not get the money because they spread out the cost to the webinars and different things like that. There is nobody going on-site like the circuit riders. That is where it happens. The rubber meets the road. That is where it is at.

Senator Boozman. In your testimony, you mentioned the circuit riders providing emergency response. Can you give some examples of that? Is anyone else out there providing that type of assistance?

Mr. Sternberg. In Arkansas, we are very proud of what we do in Arkansas Rural Water. We actually have seven big mobile generators we can deploy. An example would be February 27, 2014, my birthdate, the tornadoes came through and hit Mayflower, Arkansas and hit Vilonia, Arkansas. It was an F-4. It demolished the towns in both communities.

I was not actually in the State at the time. My staff called me and I said deploy whatever assistance they need. Find out and identify the need. Within 24 hours, we had every water system, the water and wastewater system in Mayflower, the water and wastewater system in Vilonia, up and running. We had no SOS or SSOs, sanitary sewer overflows on the sewer system.

We have four small mobile generators that we use VFDs for that we can actually run three-phase motors so we use them on the sewer lift stations. We had them on pickup trucks moving around station to station. Hardwired them, pumped all the sewer down so we never had overflows. We continually had them making the rounds.

The emergency response is very beneficial to the utilities. We are the first call. They do not call ADEM, they do not call the health department, they do not call ADEQ. They call Arkansas Rural Water and it works.

Senator Boozman. Mayor Gray, just from years of hearing testimony always being on water, I can sympathize with the situation you are in as far as your community. I do not know if you are a Republican, a Democrat or whatever, I could care less.

Mayor Gray. It does not matter at the local level. It really does not.

Senator Boozman. Exactly. I am thinking of a community in Arkansas with a good friend running the community and working very, very hard, really doing much the same things you have done and is kind of the poster child for getting on stick. He happens to be a liberal Democrat so there is no rhyme or reason to this thing. It is just communities in general.

There is a finite amount of money and we do have to be wise and use some commonsense as to the final part that you are

lacking that cost \$300 million. We have had testimony from the person that runs the unit in Decatur, Washington. They have spent, I think, \$1 billion, and do not hold me exactly responsible.

They have done a great job. The taxpayer rates have gone up dramatically. They are wanting, I think, another \$1 billion to ratchet down small amount which everyone agrees would not make any difference in the quality of the river.

If you spend a lot of money, relatively speaking, you would not need to spend \$1 billion, but just think what you could do with some of the greenery that you are doing not only to help the wildlife but also the quality of life in our communities and the adjacent things.

Again, we appreciate your story. We will go now to Senator Duckworth.

Senator Duckworth. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have one final question.

I wanted to ask Mr. Sternberg to elaborate a little bit on how the circuit riders perform in emergency situations, kind of elaborate on what we talked about just now but in terms of do they or do they not help in coordinating with local agencies and other federal agencies in the event of an emergency?

How is that integrated and how do you see that happening on the ground when there is an emergency and you have to respond

and have all different levels of government, vertical and horizontal?

Mr. Sternberg. I can give you an example in Mayflower and Vilonia. We are recognized as one of the emergency responders. We work with ADEM, we work with the Arkansas Department of Health on all public water systems.

The first call we have, if we get a call from a water system with an emergency, we contact the health department and make sure they are aware of it. They ask us to provide reports back to them of our findings. They know we are going to be deployed.

My field staff is in the field anyway and live all across the State. Normally I have someone who can get there within a hour and a half just because of where my staff lives.

We work with all the local agencies. When we came to the City of Mayflower, we checked in with the City of Mayflower. They were the ones who requested us. When they request us, we come with all our equipment and our manpower.

We have the county, the Office of Emergency Services officer there. They contact and stay in communication with ADEM at the state office. We stay in communication with the health department.

If they get any request through ADEM, it goes to the health department and comes to Rural Water. We are part of the

Arkansas Water Agency Response Network. We work very closely with them and there is no duplication of what we are doing. It works very well.

Senator Duckworth. They are part of your team. You talked about how it is so important to have a person that is there on the ground that you know and trust. Do you do emergency training programs when it comes to water emergency response and that sort of thing? Is that something on an annual basis with all the different agencies along with the circuit riders? Is that being done?

Mr. Sternberg. Actually, I am on the national level.

Senator Duckworth. You are a busy man.

Mr. Sternberg. I know. I have too many titles. I am the Chairman of the National Rural Water Association Emergency Response Committee. We meet at least twice a year. We do a one week training located somewhere throughout the Nation. This year we are going to Florida. Last year, we were in Louisiana and three years prior to that, we did in Lonoke, Arkansas. We have moved around to different places.

We have invited other State circuit riders to come in to be trained and continually update them on new things out there. It is continuation of that work.

In-State, my staff is all trained. Every month they come in, they are assigned different duties, to check out the

generators, make sure they are maintained, making sure the load bank has been done on them. We actually load bank those generators so we know even if the motor is running on that generator that does not mean that generator is putting out power.

All our generators have multi-voltage electric switches on them. When we pull up on-site, it does not matter what voltage that system has. We can set it and forget it and go with it. We did it for a reason that way.

Senator Duckworth. Wonderful. Thank you so much.

Mr. Sternberg. Thank you.

Senator Duckworth. I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Senator Boozman. Thank all of you for being here.

Any follow-up questions will be submitted to the witnesses for response. This record will be open for two weeks for additional submissions.

Thank you all for sharing our stories and commenting on the legislation before us. I think today we have demonstrated that this is an issue where there really is a lot of common ground. We are going to be working very, very hard.

Senator Duckworth and I had a great meeting yesterday talking about areas we are going to be working hard to get some things done.

With that, the meeting is adjourned. Thank you again very

much.

[Whereupon, at 3:25 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]