

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 18, 2008

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein, Chairman
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
131 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Wayne Allard, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
123 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Feinstein and Ranking Member Allard:

We are writing to thank you for your support for rural water grassroots environmental and compliance initiatives. We ask that you again prioritize funding for these local initiatives in the Fiscal Year 2009 EPA budget. Specifically, we urge you to consider providing \$16.8 million for the National Rural Water Association's technical assistance, source water protection and ground water protection efforts.

We know that this request will require some reallocation of funding within the EPA budget. However, we believe it is justified because this is the portion of the EPA budget that small communities in all the states depend on to protect their water quality and to comply with the numerous EPA environmental mandates. Small communities want to ensure quality water and stay in compliance. These rural water initiatives provide the shared technical resources to do so.

At the same time we have seen significant decreases in the amount of EPA funding used to assist small and rural communities, we have also seen a significant increase in the amount and complexity of federal environmental regulations. We don't believe the federal agencies' budgets are providing enough technical assistance for implementing the Safe Drinking Water Act in small town America in the manner intended by Congress. Small communities rely on the Appropriations Committee to ameliorate this situation and direct a small portion (less than 1 percent) of EPA's \$2.3 billion management budget be used in the field at the local level where small and rural communities benefit and environmental protection is accomplished.

The need for rural water on-site technical assistance continues to increase with the expansion of federal drinking water regulations (including arsenic, radon, operator certification requirements, disinfection byproducts, and the ground water treatment rule, in addition to the over 80 EPA rules that are currently on the books) and more stringent waste water permits. The main source of assistance for compliance with these mandates has been and will continue to be the efforts of state rural water associations.

As the Subcommittee analyzes competing requests for EPA funding priorities, small and rural communities are eager for the Subcommittee to compare the results and accomplishments of Rural Water's initiatives with any other environmental protection program. The accomplishments are documented in the 2008 report to Congress by the National Rural Water Association.

We certify that neither we nor our immediate family has a pecuniary interest in the congressionally directed spending item that we have requested, consistent with the requirements of paragraph 9 of Rule XLIV of the Standing Rules of the Senate.

We appreciate your kind support that has made this unique approach to environmental protection available to all communities. We urge your support this year of these initiatives within EPA's budget.

Sincerely,

Blanche L. Linde

Pat Roberts

Delia Starnes

Chris Ortel

John Vane

John F. Kerry

Jon Tester

Chuck Hagel

John Clapper

James Johnson

JL B

Hillary Rodham Clinton

Mike Enzi

Carl Levin

Joe Biden

John Sumner

Jim Webb

Mark Pryor

Susan Collins

Elizabeth Dole

Robert Menendez

Jim Bunning

Chuck Schumer

Ron Wyden

Ted Stevens

Byron Z. King

Olympic Snowy

Ben Cardin

Ben Sanders

Maria Cantwell

John Barrasso

Noah Coleman

Dick Lugar

Dick Durbin

George V. Voinovich

Kent Conrad

Chuck Grassley

