

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 15, 2009

The Honorable Tom Harkin  
Chairman  
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,  
HHS and Education  
SD-184  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Thad Cochran  
Ranking Member  
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,  
HHS and Education  
SD-184  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Cochran:


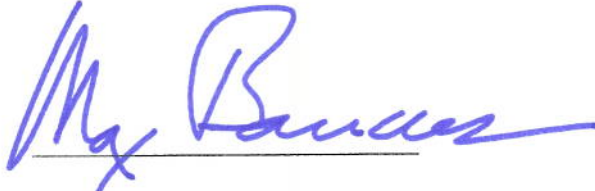
We support the Rural Community Facilities technical assistance program that is authorized in the Discretionary Fund of the Community Services Block Grant Act. This program provides assistance to rural communities to meet their water and waste disposal needs. For Fiscal Year 2010 appropriations, we request that you provide for \$10 million in funding, the same level funded in FY 2009 for this important program.

Rural Community Facilities funds six regional agencies - Rural Community Assistance Programs (RCAPs) - which provide intensive and sustained technical assistance to small, rural communities as they confront the difficult task of maintaining compliance with federal regulations and upgrading their water and sewer facilities. The RCAPs operate in all fifty states and last year served over 2,000 communities and over one million households.

Small rural communities make up the vast majority of those in violation of federal water and wastewater standards and virtually all the communities without centralized systems are located in rural areas. The greatest compliance needs for drinking water systems are among those serving communities of less than 3,300, accounting for more than 90 percent of all Safe Drinking Water Act violations. There are approximately 235,000 households in non-metro areas that lack complete plumbing, representing over 600,000 rural residents, and an EPA Needs Survey reported that the drinking water infrastructure investment necessary for communities under 10,000 is over \$72 billion, or 26 percent of the total amount.

The RCAPs rely on funding under the Office of Community Services to help small rural communities remain in compliance, build management capacity, and identify capital source for rural water and wastewater system improvements. These services remain as critical as ever and it is our hope that you will provide an appropriation of \$10 million for Fiscal Year 2010. Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

Jay Ruppelle

John Min

George V. Kenavich

Jim Johnson

Pat Roberts

Mike Crayon

Bob

Blanch L. Linnick

Bob Sanders

Tom Vance

Marl Udell

Jeanne Shaker

Jeffrey A. Marble

Wm F. B. A

Mark R. Werner

Jan E. King

Mil Johnson

Paul Bezek

Shirrod Brown

Patricia Starnow