

114TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# S. 611

To amend the Safe Drinking Water Act to reauthorize technical assistance to small public water systems, and for other purposes.

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## IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

FEBRUARY 27, 2015

Mr. WICKER (for himself, Ms. HEITKAMP, Mr. BOOZMAN, Mr. CRAPO, Mr. RISCH, Mr. FRANKEN, Mr. MORAN, Mr. SCHATZ, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. BARRASSO, Mr. ENZI, Ms. HIRONO, Mr. BLUNT, Mr. TESTER, Mr. BENNET, and Mr. INHOFE) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Environment and Public Works

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## A BILL

To amend the Safe Drinking Water Act to reauthorize technical assistance to small public water systems, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Grassroots Rural and  
5 Small Community Water Systems Assistance Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds that—

1           (1) the Safe Drinking Water Act Amendments  
2 of 1996 (Public Law 104–182) authorized technical  
3 assistance for small and rural communities to assist  
4 those communities in complying with regulations  
5 promulgated pursuant to the Safe Drinking Water  
6 Act (42 U.S.C. 300f et seq.);

7           (2) technical assistance and compliance train-  
8 ing—

9                   (A) ensures that Federal regulations do  
10 not overwhelm the resources of small and rural  
11 communities; and

12                   (B) provides small and rural communities  
13 lacking technical resources with the necessary  
14 skills to improve and protect water resources;

15           (3) across the United States, more than 90 per-  
16 cent of the community water systems serve a popu-  
17 lation of less than 10,000 individuals;

18           (4) small and rural communities have the great-  
19 est difficulty providing safe, affordable public drink-  
20 ing water and wastewater services due to limited  
21 economies of scale and lack of technical expertise;  
22 and

23           (5) in addition to being the main source of com-  
24 pliance assistance, small and rural water technical

1 assistance has been the main source of emergency  
2 response assistance in small and rural communities.

3 **SEC. 3. SENSE OF CONGRESS.**

4 It is the sense of Congress that—

5 (1) to assist small and rural communities most  
6 effectively, the Administrator of the Environmental  
7 Protection Agency should prioritize the types of  
8 technical assistance that are most beneficial to those  
9 communities, based on input from those commu-  
10 nities; and

11 (2) local support is the key to making Federal  
12 assistance initiatives work in small and rural com-  
13 munities to the maximum benefit.

14 **SEC. 4. FUNDING PRIORITIES.**

15 Section 1442(e) of the Safe Drinking Water Act (42  
16 U.S.C. 300j-1(e)) is amended—

17 (1) by designating the first through seventh  
18 sentences as paragraphs (1) through (7), respec-  
19 tively;

20 (2) in paragraph (5) (as so designated), by  
21 striking “1997 through 2003” and inserting “2015  
22 through 2020”; and

23 (3) by adding at the end the following:

24 “(8) NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS.—

1           “(A) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator  
2           may use amounts made available to carry out  
3           this section to provide grants or cooperative  
4           agreements to nonprofit organizations that pro-  
5           vide to small public water systems onsite tech-  
6           nical assistance, circuit-rider technical assist-  
7           ance programs, multistate, regional technical  
8           assistance programs, onsite and regional train-  
9           ing, assistance with implementing source water  
10          protection plans, and assistance with imple-  
11          menting monitoring plans, rules, regulations,  
12          and water security enhancements.

13          “(B) PREFERENCE.—To ensure that tech-  
14          nical assistance funding is used in a manner  
15          that is most beneficial to the small and rural  
16          communities of a State, the Administrator shall  
17          give preference under this paragraph to non-  
18          profit organizations that, as determined by the  
19          Administrator, are the most qualified and expe-  
20          rienced in providing training and technical as-  
21          sistance to small public water systems and that  
22          the small community water systems in that  
23          State find to be the most beneficial and effec-  
24          tive.

1           “(C) LIMITATION.—No grant or coopera-  
2           tive agreement provided or otherwise made  
3           available under this section may be used for liti-  
4           gation pursuant to section 1449.”.

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