

114TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

**S.** \_\_\_\_\_

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

Mr. WICKER (for himself and Ms. HEITKAMP) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on

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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—

8 (1) the Safe Drinking Water Act Amendments  
9 of 1996 (Public Law 104–182) authorized technical

1 assistance for small and rural communities to assist  
2 those communities in complying with regulations  
3 promulgated pursuant to the Safe Drinking Water  
4 Act (42 U.S.C. 300f et seq.);

5 (2) technical assistance and compliance train-  
6 ing—

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

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

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

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

21 (5) in addition to being the main source of com-  
22 pliance assistance, small and rural water technical  
23 assistance has been the main source of emergency  
24 response assistance in small and rural communities.

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

2 It is the sense of Congress that—

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

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

12 **SEC. 4. FUNDING PRIORITIES.**

13 Section 1442(e) of the Safe Drinking Water Act (42  
14 U.S.C. 300j–1(e)) is amended—

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

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

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

22 “(8) NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS.—

23 “(A) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator  
24 may use amounts made available to carry out  
25 this section to provide grants or cooperative  
26 agreements to nonprofit organizations that pro-

1           vide to small public water systems onsite tech-  
2           nical assistance, circuit-rider technical assist-  
3           ance programs, multistate, regional technical  
4           assistance programs, onsite and regional train-  
5           ing, assistance with implementing source water  
6           protection plans, and assistance with imple-  
7           menting monitoring plans, rules, regulations,  
8           and water security enhancements.

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

21          “(C) LIMITATION.—No grant or coopera-  
22          tive agreement provided or otherwise made  
23          available under this section may be used for liti-  
24          gation pursuant to section 1449.”.