112TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION
H. R. ______

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

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. HARPER introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on ________________________

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 of
6 2011”.

7 SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

8 Congress finds the following:
(1) The 1996 Amendments to the Safe Drinking Water Act authorized technical assistance for small and rural communities to assist them with compliance with rules and regulations promulgated under the Act. Technical assistance and compliance training ensures that Federal regulations do not overwhelm small and rural communities’ resources. It also allows small communities lacking technical resources access to assistance necessary to improve and protect their water resources.

(2) Across the States, over 90 percent of the community water systems serve a population of less than 10,000. Small communities have the greatest difficulty providing safe, affordable public drinking water and wastewater services due to limited economies of scale and less technical expertise.

(3) In addition to being the main source of compliance assistance, rural water technical assistance has been the main source of assistance in emergency response in small and rural communities.

(4) Technical assistance ensures that Federal regulations do not overwhelm small and rural communities’ resources. It also allows small communities lacking technical resources access to assistance necessary to improve and protect their water resources.
SEC. 3. SENSE OF CONGRESS.

It is the sense of Congress that—

(1) to most effectively assist small communities, the Environmental Protection Agency should prioritize the type of technical assistance that small communities find is the most beneficial;

(2) it is essential for the Environmental Protection Agency to consider and prioritize the type and manner of technical assistance that has the most support of each State’s local communities; and

(3) local support is the fundamental key to making the Federal funding (the Federal assistance initiatives) work in small and rural communities to the maximum benefit.

SEC. 4. FUNDING PRIORITIES.

Section 1442(e) of the Safe Drinking Water Act (42 U.S.C. 300j–1(e)) is amended as follows:

(1) In the fifth sentence by striking “1997 through 2003” and inserting “2011 through 2016”.

(2) By inserting “(1)” immediately before the first sentence.

(3) By adding at the end the following new paragraph:

“(2) The Administrator may provide technical assistance, with funds under this subsection, to non-profit organizations providing onsite technical assist-
ance, circuit-rider technical assistance programs, on-site and regional training, assistance with implementing source water protection plans, and assistance with implementation monitoring plans, rules, regulations, and water security enhancements. To assure technical assistance funding under this subsection is used in a manner most beneficial to small and rural communities in each State, the Administrator shall give preference to nonprofit organizations that, as determined by the Administrator, are the most qualified, experienced, effective, and most supported by small community water systems in the States.”.