Background:
More than 50,000 small and rural communities, comprising more than 90 percent of the drinking water supplies in the country, are responsible for providing safe, clean water to their citizens. Many of these small communities often face significant challenges in complying with federal rules, affording the latest technology, and accessing technical experts.

The EPA’s technical assistance and training program, which has been operating nationwide for the past three decades, assists these communities in securing the necessary technical expertise to improve and protect their water resources.

This program has helped ensure effective implementation of the Safe Drinking Water Act in rural areas across the country.

The Wicker-Conrad Amendment would:
• Reauthorize the Safe Drinking Water Act’s (SDWA) technical assistance and training program for $15 million a year for six years.

• Authorize the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to provide grants for technical assistance to comply with federal regulations for safe drinking water.

• Direct the EPA Administrator to provide funding to nonprofit organizations for onsite assistance, regional training, and implementation of rules and regulations to ensure compliance with the SDWA.

• Require EPA to prioritize funding to ensure resources are utilized based on specific needs identified by small and rural communities in each state.

Congress appropriated $15 million to EPA for this grant program in FY2012. The Wicker-Conrad amendment reauthorizes this program and gives states more leverage in determining how grant awards are utilized to assist rural communities.