Senators Conrad & Wicker Stand Up for Rural and Small Communities

(Washington, DC) The country's largest community-based water organization - the National Rural Water Association (NRWA) is grateful to Senators Conrad (ND) and Wicker (MS) for introducing legislation in Congress to authorize the most important element of the federal Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) program for the country. On March 7th, the Senators introduced “Grassroots Rural and Small Community Water Systems Assistance Act,” to reauthorize the SDWA’s small and rural community technical assistance provision.

Locally supported technical assistance and compliance training ensures that federal regulations don't 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. Under this authorization rural water initiatives have been operating nationwide for the past three decades and have been the main source of compliance and assistance for small and rural communities to meet the federal standards of the Safe Drinking Water Act and Clean Water Act. Small communities want to ensure quality water and this type of assistance provides the shared technical resources to do so.

Eric Volk, Executive Director of the North Dakota Rural Water Systems Association said, “We are very appreciative for Senator Conrad’s help and assistance to the state’s small and rural communities that are trying to provide safe and clean water to their citizens every day. Senator Conrad has long-supported and led the effort to build and improve drinking water and sanitation supplies in rural North Dakota. This has resulted in dramatic improvements in rural public health, a clean environment, and economic development. We support the Senator’s legislation to reauthorize technical assistance to small and rural communities. This on-site assistance is essential in addressing the lack of capacity in rural communities and is the most cost-effective way to improve and protect water quality, and help small and rural water supplies comply with environmental regulations. Rural North Dakota thanks the Senator and we are eager to see his new bill passed into law.”

Kirby Mayfield, Executive Director of Mississippi Rural Water Association said, “thank you Senator Wicker for your help and assistance to the state’s over 1,000 small and rural communities that often struggle to comply with all the mandates and meet local water needs. Water quality is one of the most pressing public health concerns in rural Mississippi and essential for long-term economic sustainability. However, due to a lack of economies of scale, it is often more difficult for small towns to comply with federal rules, afford the latest technology, and have access to technical experts. Complicated federal regulations are often more expensive in rural and small communities, than in large communities. Senator Wicker has long supported these types of rural initiatives that are results oriented, non-regulatory, less bureaucratic, less expensive and result in better water. Small communities thank the Senator for sponsoring the bill.”

The list of communities assisted last year is available in Rural Water's Report to Congress - www.ruralwater.org/report. The legislation is available at: www.ruralwater.org/senatebill.pdf. Initial cosponsors of the legislation include Senators: Klobuchar (MN), Tim Johnson (SD), Risch (ID), Inhofe (OK), Landrieu (LA), Tester (MT) and Moran (KS), Cochran (MS), and Udall (NM), Crapo (ID).