

# *Rep. Etheridge Stands Up for Rural and Small Communities*

(Washington, DC) The country's largest community-based water organization - the National Rural Water Association, NRWA, is happy to report good news for the rural water systems of America. Today, Congressman Bob Etheridge (NC), introduced H.R. 6313, legislation to reauthorize the Safe Drinking Water Act's small and rural community technical assistance provision.

Rural Water Associations' technical assistance and compliance training (authorized in the Safe Drinking Water Act) 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 federal standards. Without these initiatives, effective implementation of the Safe Drinking Water Act and Clean Water Act in rural areas would be nearly impossible. Small communities want to ensure quality water and stay in compliance. Rural Water provides them the shared technical resources to do so.

Rodney Tart, the President of the National Rural Water Association, from Harnett County, NC said, *"We are grateful for Congressman Etheridge's help and assistance to the states over 50,000 small and rural communities that are trying to provide safe and clean water to their citizens every day. Drinking water and wastewater quality are two critical elements in a rural community's environment and its viability. Drinking water quality is one of the most pressing public health concerns in rural America and essential for long-term economic stability. The Congressman's bill ensures that the most helpful and the most environmental beneficial initiatives are available to rural communities. This approach is truly unique in the federal effort to protect the environment because it accomplishes progressive environmental protection with the support of the local community. Small communities comprise more than 90 percent of the water supplies in the states. 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."*

Similar legislation (S. 1429) was unanimously approved by the U.S. Senate Environment and Public Works Committee on December 12, 2007.

The list of communities that were assisted last year is available in Rural Water's "2008 Report to Congress" on the internet at: [www.ruralwater.org/report](http://www.ruralwater.org/report).

A copy of the legislation is available at: [www.ruralwater.org/etheridgebill.pdf](http://www.ruralwater.org/etheridgebill.pdf).

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