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(Original Signature of Member)

110TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. _____

To amend the Safe Drinking Water Act to reauthorize the technical assistance to small public water systems.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. ETHERIDGE introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on _____

A BILL

To amend the Safe Drinking Water Act to reauthorize the technical assistance to small public water systems.

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. FINDINGS.**

4 The Congress finds that:

5 (1) The 1996 Amendments to the Safe Drink-
6 ing Water (PL 104-182, 42 USC § 300j-1) author-
7 ized technical assistance for small and rural commu-
8 nities to assist them with compliance with rules and
9 regulations promulgated under the Safe Drinking

1 Water Act. Technical assistance and compliance
2 training ensures that Federal regulations don't over-
3 whelm small and rural communities' resources. It
4 also allows small communities lacking technical re-
5 sources access to assistance necessary to improve
6 and protect their water resources.

7 (2) Under this authorization locally supported
8 technical assistance initiatives have been operating
9 nationwide for the past three decades and have been
10 the main source of compliance and assistance for
11 small and rural communities to meet Federal stand-
12 ards. Without these initiatives, effective implementa-
13 tion of the Safe Drinking Water Act and Clean
14 Water Act in rural areas would be nearly impossible.

15 (3) Across the States over 90 percent of the
16 community water systems serve a population less
17 than 10,000. Small communities have the greatest
18 difficulty providing safe, affordable public drinking
19 water and wastewater services due to limited econo-
20 mies of scale and less technical expertise.

21 (4) In addition, extending the Safe Drinking
22 Water Act's authorization, this legislation would re-
23 quire that the Environmental Protection Agency
24 prioritize technical assistance funding to organiza-
25 tions that have the most support of each State's

1 local communities. Having the local support is the
2 fundamental key to making the Federal funding (the
3 Federal assistance initiatives) work in small and
4 rural communities. This will ensure that any funding
5 used for technical assistance initiatives will work
6 best and result in the most benefit to each State's
7 local small and rural communities.

8 (5) In addition to being the main source of
9 compliance assistance, rural water technical assist-
10 ance has been the main source of assistance in emer-
11 gency response in small and rural communities.
12 Rural water technicians were the lead assistance in
13 Greensburg, Kansas, in restoring the drinking water
14 and sanitary sewer service to that tornado-stricken
15 small community (by providing water to the tem-
16 porary hospital, housing units, and the community
17 in time). This was also the case in the response to
18 the hurricanes in the Gulf Coast where the hundreds
19 of small and rural communities relied on assistance
20 from the local and surrounding State rural water as-
21 sociations for immediate assistance in restoring
22 drinking water and sanitation service.

23 **SEC. 2. FUNDING PRIORITIES.**

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

1 (1) In the fifth sentence by striking
2 “15,000,000” and inserting “20,000,000” and by
3 striking “1997 through 2003” and inserting “2009
4 through 2013”.

5 (2) By inserting “(1)” after “(e) Technical As-
6 sistance. __” and by adding the following new para-
7 graph at the end thereof:

8 “(2) The Administrator may provide technical assist-
9 ance, under this subsection, to organizations providing on-
10 site technical assistance, circuit-rider technical assistance
11 programs, on-site and regional training, assistance with
12 implementing source water protection plans, and assist-
13 ance with implementation monitoring plans, rules, regula-
14 tions, and water security enhancements. To assure tech-
15 nical assistance funding under this subsection is used in
16 a manner most beneficial to small communities in each
17 State, the Administrator shall give preference to nonprofit
18 organizations that, as determined by the Administrator,
19 are qualified, effective, and have the most support (or a
20 majority of support) from small water systems in the
21 States”.