

Rural and Small Communities Laud Rep. Etheridge's Leadership as Drinking Water Bill Passes Full Committee

(Washington, DC) The country's largest community-based water organization - the National Rural Water Association (NRWA) is grateful for Congressman Bob Etheridge's support and leadership on legislation critical to drinking water quality and safety. Earlier this Congress, Rep. Etheridge introduced H.R. 2206, legislation to reauthorize the Safe Drinking Water Act's small and rural community technical assistance provision.

On May 26, 2010, the House of Representatives Committee on Energy and Commerce approved by a vote of 45 to 1, the Assistance, Quality, and Affordability Act of 2010 (H.R. 5320, the "AQUA Act") to reauthorize and increase funding for the drinking water state revolving fund (SRF) under the Safe Drinking Water Act. This bill included an "Etheridge-type" small community technical assistance section that is consistent with the principles and authorizations in H.R. 2206. Small communities had urged the Committee to include the "Etheridge-type" provision in the legislation.

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.

Rodney Tart, former President of the National Rural Water Association, from Harnett County, NC said, *"We are grateful for Congressman Etheridge's help and assistance to the country's 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. Small communities comprise more than 90 percent of the water supplies in the country. However, due to their 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."*

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