Each year, state rural water associations mobilize volunteer representatives from across the country to persuade individual Congressmen and Senators to support federal funding for small and rural community water initiatives.

This is our strength; by having thousands of small community representatives organize together with a common message and each petitioning their elected officials in Washington, we can be heard. Our success is directly related to our local volunteers’ ability to persuade their Congressmen and Senators. Our national agenda is determined in Washington D.C., but the core of the influence and persuasion that allows for us to accomplish our agenda happens back home.

*Our grassroots relationship with Congressmen and Senators is our strength.*

Our membership receives technical assistance, infrastructure and outreach funding (i.e. circuit riders, source water, training, wastewater, etc.) from Congress through the federal agencies each year through the Congressional “appropriations process.”

This process starts early in the calendar year, as Congress assembles Appropriations Bills that fund the federal government, and attempts to finalize Appropriations Bills (with the President signing these appropriations bills into law and allowing the government to be funded) by the beginning of the following federal fiscal year on October 1st.

Each year, Rural Water urges Congress, through the appropriations process, to fund the water initiatives that are most beneficial to small and rural communities. The specific funding levels and initiatives are contained on the following two pages.

Every Member of Congress should know about their state rural water association, understand its mission, the daily accomplishments of your efforts, the funding we receive, and know about the rural water members in their District.

*Our Objective:* to educate and persuade Congress that our Rural Water funding initiatives are the most effective (for safe water, water quality, compliance assistance with mandates, rural development, and public health protection for small & rural communities) working in their State/Congressional District and the rest of the country – and for them to express their support to the appropriate Appropriations Committees (further explained on next page).

We want to assist you in this grand enterprise, please contact us.

**Rural Water’s Washington Office** (202-742-4350)

**Bill Simpson** <nrwabills@nrwa.org>  **John Montgomery** <JHMIlaw@erols.com>
**Mike Keegan** <keegan@ruralwater.org>  **Fitz Elder** <fitz@nrwa.org>
**Roxane Holton** <roxane@nrwa.org>
Description of Rural Water Priority Initiatives

**USDA Circuit Riders**
Circuit Riders provide the primary assistance to small communities to operate safe and clean drinking water supplies—and comply with water regulations. This assistance protects the sizeable investment the federal government has made in rural water infrastructure. Circuit Riders are in the field everyday helping systems with compliance, operations, maintenance, management, and training.

**USDA Farm Service Agency**
**Grassroots Source Water Protection**
This is the only statewide local community-based initiative ensuring environmentally progressive local land-use decision without the controversy and bureaucracy of regulatory programs. It provides each state with one full-time person to organize and assist rural communities, farmers, and other land-use interests in the implementation of source water protection plans including non-point source (runoff) protection practices in agriculture regions. This initiative allows the people who benefit from environmental protection to take responsibility for achieving it—ensuring its success and eliminating local controversy. The additional funding will be used to expand the source water initiative to all state associations.

**USDA Rural Utilities Service Water and Waste Disposal Loans and Grants**
Small communities often have difficulty providing safe, affordable drinking water and sanitation due to limited economies of scale and lack of technical expertise. Rural communities often have lower median household incomes and higher water rates compared to larger communities.

To overcome this, rural communities have turned to USDA water loans and grants to construct water and wastewater infrastructure through loans provided at reasonable rates and terms. Without this assistance, many could not construct new systems, expand existing ones, or comply with mandates.

**Safe Drinking Water Act and Clean Water Act Assistance**
Small and rural communities rely on local/on-site technical assistance and training for compliance with the myriad of federal EPA regulations, avoiding EPA fines, and operating drinking water and wastewater supplies. According to small and rural communities, this EPA funded local initiative is the most effective environmental protection efforts for drinking water & wastewater, ground water, source water, and compliance with the Safe Drinking Water Act and Clean Water Act. Small communities want to ensure quality water and stay in compliance—rural water provides them the shared technical resources to do it. Next year, the need for rural water assistance will greatly increase with the expansion of federal water regulations.

**EPA State Revolving Funds**
Provides low-interest and subsidized funding to communities to comply with federal water standards.

**No Earmarks**
All rural water priorities are authorized in the Farm Bill, the Safe Drinking Water Act, or the Clean Water Act. They are not earmarks.