

The Washington Report

Rural Water Grassroots Campaign Succeeds in Making New Chemical Security Legislation Better for Water Supplies

(Sept. 29, 2006) Just this week - in the closing days of this Congress, some U.S. House and Senate lawmakers proposed an amendment to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) spending bill that would give the Department authority to issue new chemical security regulations. The regulatory proposal would have covered water and wastewater supplies – and included new civil penalties for violations of the proposed regulations. As the Congress was deciding on the final legislation, state rural water associations urged Congress to treat small communities differently than the chemical industry.

“Small communities' water and wastewater utilities routinely use chemicals to treat/disinfect drinking water and wastewater to promote public health and protect the environment. However, small and rural community water supplies are self-governing, non-profit organizations, they are not businesses, and have no incentive not to take all security actions possible. They are fundamentally different from chemical businesses. A list of over 50,000 small communities (many governed by local volunteers, teachers, mayors, doctors, retired citizens, farmers, etc.) that would be open to new regulations and new civil penalties under these legislative proposals is available at: www.ruralwater.org/seclist.txt. Advancing security in small communities is more of a RESOURCE problem than a REGULATORY problem. Every small community faces unlimited challenges and needs – with limited financial, administrative, and technical resources -- and they need to ensure these resources are most effectively allocated. Please consider an approach to enhance security by prioritizing funding, technical assistance, education, and federal resources - the most effective methods for the federal government to protect small wastewater systems without overburdening the capabilities and resources of small local government.”

[Cite: www.ruralwater.org/seccollins2.pdf]

On September 25, 2006, we were successful – thanks to our grassroots effort to persuade Congress to stand up for small and rural communities. Congress exempted water and wastewater supplies from the new chemical facilities regulation. Congratulations to all the rural water members who urged their Congressmen and Senators to “stand up for rural water.” Many of the biggest industry and environmental community lobbyists, who were closely watching the legislation, were impressed with rural water’s ability to persuade key decision makers on Capitol Hill of our position in the final days of this process.

The President has signed this bill into law. For the text of the legislation (House Report No. 109–699, Conference Report on H.R. 5441) and more information on this and other topics, please see <http://www.ruralwater.org>.

Standing Up for Small and Rural Communities



Reporting the Benefits of Rural Water Membership

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Contact: Mike Keegan – keegan@ruralwater.org