

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1804

February 1, 2007

Mr. Stephen Johnson
Administrator
Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue
MC 1301-A
Washington, D.C. 20460

Dear Administrator Johnson:

I am writing to urge the Environmental Protection Agency to provide funding for on-site technical assistance that aids rural communities in maintaining stable supplies of clean drinking water. It has come to my attention that under the upcoming Continuing Resolution for fiscal year 2007, no funding will be specifically directed to on-site technical assistance. However, the Environmental Programs and Management (EPM) division will have discretion to allocate their budget as it chooses. On-site technical assistance is a vital service to rural communities and I ask that the EPM allocate funding for this purpose.

Rural communities frequently lack sufficient resources to understand and comply with the latest safe drinking water regulations and best practices. Without the on-site technical assistance that has been effectively and commendably provided in all 50 states by the Rural Water Association (RWA) and its local affiliates, drinking water standards in rural communities could suffer, and already-strained rural water providers could be confronted with significant fines and penalties.

Both Chambers of Congress have recognized the importance of on-site technical assistance to rural communities. In fiscal year 2006, Congress appropriated \$11 million for such services to rural water communities. The Senate again recognized the importance of these services by attempting to allocate \$11 million to the RWA for fiscal year 2007 in the Interior Appropriations bill, but unfortunately, the bill was not enacted into law, which has placed Americans in rural areas in this difficult situation.

I believe it is of utmost importance that on-site technical assistance be provided to rural communities. I believe that Congress would have addressed this need if the appropriations process had proceeded under the regular order. I respectfully ask that when

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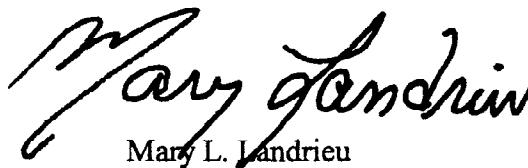
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you receive your budget for the remainder of fiscal year 2007, you allocate funding for on-site technical assistance to rural water communities.

I appreciate your assistance in this matter and look forward to working together to achieve this important goal.

With warmest regards, I am

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary Landrieu". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "M" and "L".

Mary L. Landrieu
United States Senator

MLL:elc



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C., 20460

MAR - 8 2007

OFFICE OF
WATER

The Honorable Mary L. Landrieu
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Landrieu:

Thank you for your letter of February 1, 2007, to Stephen L. Johnson, Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), expressing your support for provision of funding to the National Rural Water Association (NRWA) from discretionary money that may be available to the Agency in the final Fiscal Year 2007 budget. I have been asked to respond to your letter on behalf of the Administrator. EPA agrees with you that it is critical to provide training and technical assistance to small drinking water systems to ensure that they are able to comply with standards under the Safe Drinking Water Act.

As you know, the NRWA receives financial assistance through Congressionally-directed funding in EPA's appropriations bills. EPA is reviewing the final appropriations language and will evaluate funding options in light of mandatory fixed costs and other priorities.

Irrespective of our final decision on funding for NRWA, I want to assure you that EPA will continue to support small systems through our other activities. The Agency supports training and develops targeted tools to help support small system implementation of regulatory requirements. States can also use funding from their Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) grants to support small systems. In addition to the \$14 million expended in FY 2006 for technical assistance to small systems, states also expended an additional \$38 million for other set-aside activities that primarily benefit small systems.

Again, thank you for your letter. If you have further questions, please contact me or your staff may call Steven Kinberg, in EPA's Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Relations, at (202) 564-5037.

*Thank
you*

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Benjamin H. Grumbles".

Benjamin H. Grumbles
Assistant Administrator