

U.S. Sen. Baldwin: Introduces legislation to improve rural water infrastructure in Wisconsin

Posted on Thursday, May 24, 2018

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin today introduced legislation to fund critical water infrastructure projects in rural Wisconsin communities. The *Rural Water Infrastructure Improvements Act* would reauthorize and expand the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) grant and loan program that provides funding to states, local governments and tribes for clean and reliable drinking water systems, sanitary sewage and solid waste disposal, and storm water drainage to households and businesses in rural areas.

“Safe drinking water is a priority for every community and is essential to the economic health of Wisconsin’s rural communities,” said Senator Baldwin. “Too often, small and rural communities across the country get left behind and lack the resources to make needed upgrades or repairs to their water and wastewater systems. That’s why I’m working for strong investments to support our rural areas and make sure they have access to clean drinking water and safe and reliable water infrastructure.”

The USDA Rural Development Water and Waste Disposal Loan and Grant Program gives financial assistance to rural communities in order to provide safe and affordable drinking water and sanitation. Since 1940, USDA’s rural water program has made more than 96,000 loans and grants to small and rural communities totaling \$54.6 billion. These loans and grants allow water infrastructure initiatives to move forward, driving economic development and agricultural-related advances in small and rural communities, and spurring dramatic improvements to quality of life,

the environment and public health.

“On behalf of the Wisconsin Rural Water Association, we would like to thank Senator Baldwin for advancing these reforms that will directly benefit small and rural communities in Wisconsin and throughout the nation,” said Chris Groh, Executive Director of Wisconsin Rural Water Association. “Over 70 years, Congress has authorized and strengthened USDA’s rural water initiatives that made great advancements in the standard of living in rural America. The true infrastructure needs for small rural communities are staggering and the *Rural Water Infrastructure Improvements Act* will help us meet that need.”

“The Wisconsin Towns Association and the National Association of Towns and Townships appreciate Senator Baldwin’s commitment to ensuring that all of our communities – even the most rural – have access to essential infrastructure,” said Mike Koles, Executive Director of WTA and National Association of Towns and Townships Board Member. “The *Rural Water Infrastructure Improvements Act* will help our towns in Wisconsin and nationwide secure financing to maintain access to clean and reliable drinking water and sanitary sewer disposal. Again, we thank her.”

The *Rural Water Infrastructure Improvements Act* is supported by the National Rural Water Association, National Association of Counties, National Association of Towns and Townships, American Society of Civil Engineers, Wisconsin Towns Association and the Wisconsin Rural Water Association.

Specifically, Senator Baldwin’s legislation would:

- Reauthorize USDA Rural Development’s Water, Waste Disposal, and Wastewater Facility grants and loans through 2023.
- Increase the maximum amount for revolving loan funds for financing water and wastewater projects to \$200,000.
- Allow for loans for local utilities with experience delivering water or wastewater programs to provide assistance to unserved and underserved local communities.
- Increase the population ceiling for the direct and guaranteed loan programs to allow access for rural communities that lack affordable financing options for their water and wastewater systems.
- Provide mandatory funding to reduce the backlog of pending water and wastewater applications.

More information on the *Rural Water Infrastructure Improvements Act* is available [here](#).