



KRWA AND NRWA – THE POWER OF ASSOCIATION

I am pleased to have been recently elected as a Director of the National Rural Water Association (NRWA). My term began at the closing of the 2017 NRWA conference held in Orlando, Fla. The role of NRWA director for Kansas was held for 25 years by Dennis Schwartz who represented Kansas and KRWA with dignity and acclaim, including his term as President of the NRWA. It is my intention to be as involved as I can in the NRWA organization and to always push for common sense reasonableness within the NRWA and on the positions that it takes. I fully understand that one person can only do so much, but I promise to do what I can on issues that impact local communities.

The NRWA is the largest utility organization in the U.S. The NRWA represents more than 55,000 water and wastewater utilities. The NRWA has long-standing support for the USDA Rural Development programs that provide funding for smaller water and wastewater utilities and other community facilities. While there are other funding programs today in addition to the USDA programs, it was the USDA programs and its predecessor agency, the Farmers Home Administration, that was the only game in town for the vast majority of rural water systems and small community systems when they were developing in the 1950s and beyond. As you may recall, the loan to Crawford Chicopee in southeast Kansas was among the first

water system loans approved in the nation. Thanks to Congressional support, often due to the strong leadership of members from Kansas, the USDA programs have been helpful beyond measure to communities across our state and the nation

NRWA focus

While support for necessary funding is important, it is only one focus of NRWA. Another major focus is to monitor regulations. NRWA works to keep water and drinking water regulations as reasonable as possible. This is where the power of an association comes in. Passing or changing legislation is not an easy task. But the NRWA has been and continues to be a respected voice for rural America. Members of both the House and Senate know that when, for example, Kansas Rural Water Association makes a statement, it's going to be credible. And if and when Kansas Rural Water or the NRWA say they are going to do something, it gets done. And it gets done often with the help of local systems. Together, people can accomplish something; alone, you can sit on the sidelines and complain and that's all that is likely to happen.

As a couple of examples where NRWA is impacting policies on regulations can be found in the recent announcement that Senator Wicker from Mississippi has succeeded in having EPA agree that the mailing of public notices for disinfection byproducts Stage II violations is being modified. Soon, EPA is to announce that such notices may be



sent via email. Getting this change, or better yet, doing away completely with the requirement to provide the notices, has been a long campaign by the Mississippi Rural Water Association and Kansas Rural Water Association. Articles by KRWA consultant Pat McCool have been cited numerous times in drawing attention to the costs of these notices. The real problem is that the systems that purchase water cannot do anything about the compliance with disinfection byproducts in the first place. Like numerous other public notices, the consumers become more confused about their public water supply than they would be without it.

In referencing the articles that Pat McCool did on the topic of disinfection byproducts, it brings to mind another point about KRWA. KRWA's magazine is not published as a vehicle to "sell ads". The purpose is to provide a resource to help people in other systems. You can find those articles at these links on the KRWA Web site:

- "Disinfectants and Disinfection By-Products . . . the suspicions, the truth and the solutions", March 2005 issue. <http://krwa.net/portals/krwa/lifeline/currentissue/0503dis.pdf>
- "State 2 Monitoring . . . Absurd? Unnecessary? Illogical? Authoritarian? Or Just as Waste of Money?" November 2013 issue. <http://krwa.net/portals/krwa/lifeline/1311/024.pdf>

Recently, the *New York Times* reported that one in five American homes are still without sewer lines. That article

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featured the former mayor of White Hall, a town of about 800 in Lowndes County, Georgia. The town is more than 90 percent black. The town did not have running water until the 1980's. It is yet to have a centralized sewer system.

It is obvious that many communities across the U.S. have been left behind. It is obvious that while many people also think that "government is bad", there are things that "government" can and

must do to help improve the quality of life for its citizens. That community in Georgia, as others including many in Kansas, need to make improvements to their water and wastewater systems, or in some cases, install the first project. Those improvements will require funding and much of it will have to come from national and state-based programs.

As the NRWA Director from Kansas, I will always carry the needs of communities first, no matter what discussion group I am involved in or what the issues are, including asking for support for funding of those programs and initiatives that help our citizens.

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