

Legislative update: bills of interest to water systems

There are five bills (two are identical) in the 2004 Kansas Legislative Session that directly affect public water systems. KRWA began posting a "Legislative Update" on the KRWA website in late January. I take this opportunity to provide this report in *The Lifeline*. Also, check the KRWA website at www.krwa.net for more current information. It is updated each Friday. An excellent resource to keep informed is at this website: www.kslegislature.org.

KRWA has received permission from *Hawver News* to reprint and distribute their listing of legislators, the legislators' room and committee assignments and phone numbers. If you would like one, please email me at: muel@tctelco.net with your postal mail address and I will send you a copy. Now for the bills that should be of interest to public water systems.

HB 2480: This bill adds the Kansas Biological Survey as a member of the Kansas Water Authority. The bill has been referred to the House Environment Committee.

HB 2484: Beginning in 2006, this bill would provide for the transfer of receipts from the Clean Drinking Water Fee from the General Fund to the Kansas Water Office to be used for

maintaining and preserving reservoirs used for drinking water and technical assistance to public water systems. A hearing was held on February 10 by the House Taxation Committee. The Clean Drinking Water Fee was created as a result of Senate Bill 322 in the 2001 session. Cities and rural water districts were given the option to "opt out" of the Clean Drinking Water Fee (three cents per thousand gallons of water sold at retail) to instead continue to pay sales tax on purchases by the water system. HB 2484 also provides an additional opportunity for those systems that remained in sales

January 27. The bill was approved by the Senate on February 8 with an amendment to distinguish between fire hydrants and "flush" hydrants.

It is not the intent of either HB 2528 or SB 292 to require any water system to install fire hydrants or flush hydrants. The intent of both bills is to "allow" fire districts and townships to pay for the installation of fire hydrants or flush hydrants on public water systems.

SB 352: Would remove the ability of municipalities to place a lien on a landowner's property if a tenant does not pay water/sewer charges. The bill

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tax to change and pay the Clean Drinking Water Fee in lieu of sales tax. Presently approximately 85 cities and RWDs continue to pay sales tax while the 825 other systems chose to pay the Fee.

HB 2528: Allows fire districts to pay for the material and installation of fire hydrants or fill "flush" hydrants on a public water supply system upon agreement by both parties. The bill was referred to the House Local Government Committee. A hearing was held on Wednesday, January 21, 2004 and the bill was recommended for passage to the House.

SB 292: Identical to HB 2528, SB 292 was heard on

was referred to the Senate Elections and Local Government Committee. A hearing was held January 27. Kansas Rural Water Association will oppose this bill in further hearings. The League of Kansas Municipalities also opposes this bill.

KRWA is also reviewing considerations in possible modification of state statutes to allow easier consolidation of rural water districts.

KRWA went to Washington in early February to ask for support for USDA Rural Development and EPA loan and grant programs and funding for NRWA programs for Circuit Rider, EPA training and Ground Water techs. See next page.

David Mueller
KRWA Director



Funding requests made for water and wastewater programs

Kansas Rural Water Association, as an affiliate of National Rural Water Association, recently requested federal legislators' support of appropriations for USDA Rural Development's loan and grant program as well as for US EPA funding that benefits water and wastewater utilities.

KRWA explained that new regulations continue to require that small water systems to make upgrades, particularly in surface water treatment -- and that for many systems, their only option is low cost financing to make the project feasible. KRWA told legislators that regulations don't produce safe water; people do.

KRWA also requested continued support for funding of

National Rural Water programs that provide for two circuit riders, one wastewater tech assistance position under USDA Rural Development and EPA funding for a training and tech assistance program and groundwater tech.

Meetings were held with staff and legislators, including Senator Brownback, Rep. Tiahrt and Rep. Moran and staff only at Senator Roberts' office.



KRWA Director David Mueller and Elmer Ronnebaum visit with Senator Brownback, above and Rep. Jerry Moran, below.



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