

Rural Water Infrastructure Improvements Act

Introduced by U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin

Safe drinking water is a priority for every community and is essential for strong rural economies. However, small and rural communities across the country often lack the resources to make needed upgrades or repairs to their water and wastewater systems. Moreover, fewer ratepayers and other challenges can make it difficult for small communities to fund critical water infrastructure projects that serve homes and businesses.

USDA Rural Development's Water and Waste Disposal Loan and Grant Program is critical to providing financial assistance to rural communities in order to provide safe and affordable drinking water and sanitation. The program 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.

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. In this way, water infrastructure initiatives have been the engine of economic development and agricultural-related advances in small and rural communities, and they have provided for dramatic improvements to quality of life, the environment and public health.

The legislation makes small and rural community water issues a priority by:

- Reauthorizing USDA Rural Development's Water, Waste Disposal, and Wastewater Facility grants and loans through 2023.
- Increasing the maximum amount for revolving loan funds for financing water and wastewater projects to \$200,000.
- Allowing for loans for local utilities with experience delivering water or wastewater programs to provide assistance to unserved and underserved local communities.
- Increasing 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.
- Providing mandatory funding to reduce the backlog of pending water and wastewater applications.

The *Rural Water Infrastructure Improvements Act* is supported by:

- National Rural Water Association
- National Association of Counties
- National Association of Towns and Townships
- American Society of Civil Engineers
- Wisconsin Rural Water Association
- Wisconsin Towns Association