



The Western Coalition of Arid States

WESTCAS

August 16, 2017

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The Honorable John Hoeven
Chair

Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development,
Food and Drug Administration and Related Agencies
338 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20510

The Honorable Jeff Merkley
Ranking Member

Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development,
Food and Drug Administration and Related Agencies
313 Hart Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, D. C. 20510

Dear Chairman Hoeven and Ranking Member Merkley:

As you work with your colleagues in the House and the Senate with regard to developing a final FY18 Agriculture, rural Development, Food and Drug Administration and Related Agencies appropriations bill, the Western Coalition of Arid States [WESTCAS] wishes to thank you for your support of the Rural Water and Waste Disposal Program Account of the USDA budget. This important program was zeroed out by the Administration in its FY18 budget request to the Congress despite being funded at a level of \$571,190,000 in FY17. Such a loss of funding would have a highly adverse impact on rural areas including those located in the Arid West which is where our WESTCAS membership is located.

Thank you for the \$472,700,000 provided in the full House Appropriations markup of your bill that restores much of the program to its FY17 level. We respectfully request that as this bill continues to move through the Congressional appropriations process that you consider accepting the higher funding level provided by your counterparts in the Senate of \$550,383,000.

WESTCAS is an organization of water and wastewater service providers who advocate for water resources in the Arid Southwest. We are active in both the legislative and regulatory areas with regard to water related issues that affect our membership. We work to raise awareness of the unique character of arid regions that lead to the development of proposed legislation and rulemaking in support of water resources.

The Voice of Water Quality in the Arid West

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W E S T C A S

As an example of the benefits of the USDA Water and Waste Disposal Loan and Grant Program, one of WESTCAS' member agencies, the Coachella Valley Water District (CVWD) has used grant funds from this program to install basic water infrastructure needs for severely disadvantaged communities to have safe drinking water and sanitary conditions for managing their sewage. CWD has found no other program able to fill this need as effectively as this one managed by the Department of Agriculture.

We urge you and your Senate colleagues to hold firm with regard to your Senate level of funding of \$550,383,000 for the Rural Water and Waste Disposal Program Account in the final version of the FY18 Agriculture Appropriations bill. Thank you again for your leadership and support with regard to this issue.

Sincerely,



Steve Bigley
President

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