

July 29, 2014

Clean Water Affordability and the Need for Responsible Relief

Co-sponsor H.R. 3862, Clean Water Affordability Act

Dear Colleague,

Last week the House Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment held an important hearing to look at the state of clean water affordability in this country and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) new integrated planning approach for municipal wastewater and stormwater requirements.

Since passage of the Clean Water Act (CWA) in 1971, this country's water quality has indisputably improved. However, the command-and-control nature of the CWA, coupled with the estimated \$300-500 billion needed in wastewater infrastructure improvements over the next 20 years, has also led to a buildup of costly regulations on the nation's communities and their rate-paying residents who foot the bill.

In our home states of Ohio and Minnesota, we are seeing firsthand the financial struggle communities are under to meet their Clean Water Act (CWA) requirements. For example, in Ohio, the City of Defiance is under a 20-year consent decree to separate their combined sewer system. Only five years into the project, the City has already spent \$30 million and has plans to spend tens of millions more. This has caused water and sewer rates to skyrocket for Defiance's 17,000 residents, who pay ten times more per month than residents outside the city. In Minnesota, new nutrient regulations are expected to cost the City of Rochester, a city of just over 100,000 people, \$100 million in new wastewater costs with additional stormwater cost ramifications as well. Prior to these regulations, the City was only anticipating costs of \$5 million in 2014 to meet its wastewater and stormwater permits.

To help communities more affordably manage their CWA requirements, we have introduced H.R. 3862, *The Clean Water Affordability Act*, to ensure that clean water agencies that are facing unprecedented financial challenges have the flexibility they need to undertake clean water projects in a more affordable manner. Specifically, our legislation would do four critical things: 1) Codify EPA's *Integrated Municipal Stormwater and Wastewater Planning Approach Framework* to help all communities meet their regulatory obligations under the CWA in a more sustainable manner; 2) Assure communities their clean water investments will be secure for longer than five years by extending EPA permit terms to up to 25 years for communities with an approved integrated plan; 3) Revise Clean Water State Revolving Fund capitalization grant agreements to require states to set aside 15 percent for assistance to municipalities of fewer than 10,000 individuals; and 4) Require EPA to revise and broaden guidance for determining a community's financial capability to more accurately reflect a community's financial challenges.

H.R. 3862 would provide responsible relief to the clean water agencies around the country that are facing unprecedented financial challenges. We urge you to join us in supporting this important legislation. To become a co-sponsor please contact Allison Witt with Congressman Latta at allison.witt@mail.house.gov or 225-6405 or Randolph Briley with Congressman Walz at randolph.briley@mail.house.gov or 225-2472.

Sincerely,

/s/

Robert E. Latta

Member of Congress

/s/

Timothy Walz

Member of Congress