

Legislative Update
Clancy Dempsey, Executive Director

On February 13th, a group of four NeRWA representatives traveled to Washington DC to meet with Nebraska's elected federal officials. Tom Goulette, NeRWA Board President, Duane Grashorn of People Service, Jim Green of McCool Junction, and myself traveled to DC to request that the Nebraska delegation support the funding of rural water programs. The trip was very successful – Congressman Adrian Smith, Jeff Fortenberry, Lee Terry and Senator Chuck Hagel pledged their support by signing a Dear Colleague letter sent to the Appropriations subcommittees that are responsible for rural water program funding. To garner the support of Senator Nelson, it was necessary to ask our membership for help by writing to the Senator. This extra measure was needed because of the Senator's position on the Interior Appropriations Subcommittee. In short, it was imperative to demonstrate that the rural water programs were important to Nebraska. On behalf of the NeRWA board and staff, I would like to thank everyone who took the time to write a letter to Senator Ben Nelson.

I am excited to report that your efforts, our efforts, paid off! Senator Nelson took notice of the letters he received from many operators, mayors, board/council members, and administrators across Nebraska. We received word this week that Senator Nelson included rural water funding in his request to the Chair of the Interior Appropriations Subcommittee. While this does not provide any guarantees, this was our goal and the best outcome we could have hoped for. It is fitting that we offer thanks to the Senator and his staff. I encourage you to reach out to Senator Nelson one more time and let him know that Nebraska's small communities are appreciative of his efforts. Perhaps the easiest way to say thanks is to visit the Senator's website - www.bennelson.senate.gov - and send an email by clicking on the link at the bottom of the page. Let Senator Nelson know that his support of the rural water programs is important and didn't go unnoticed by the people who benefit from rural water and have the most to lose if rural water programs are not funded. I sincerely hope that you will take the time to do this.

I kept a list of the letters we received that I would eventually forward to the Senator's office. Some systems sent more than one letter, as indicated by parentheses (#). I apologize if I inadvertently left anyone off of the list.

Abie, Ainsworth, Alexandria, Allen, Alliance, Arapahoe, Arlington, Arnold, Atkinson (3), Bancroft, Barneston, Beaver Crossing, Bee, Bellwood, Bertrand, Bristow, Broadwater, Bruning (2), Bruno, Brunswick, Burwell, Bushnell, Cambridge, Cass County RW #1, Cass County RW #2 (2), Cedar Bluffs, Cedar Knox RW, Cedar Rapids, Ceresco, Chappell (3), Clarkson, Concord, Cozad, Crawford, Dakota City (3), Dalton, Davey, Decatur, Denton, Deshler, Dodge,

Doniphan, Douglas, Dwight, Elgin, Emerson, Endicott, Eustis, Exeter, Fairbury, Fairfield (2), Falls City (3), Farnam, Farwell, Franklin, Garland, Genoa, Greeley, Gresham, Gibbon, Guide Rock (2), Haigler, Hampton, Harrison, Hayes Center, Henry, Howells, Hyannis, Juniata, Kenesaw, Kimball, Lancaster RW #1, Laurel, Lebanon (2), Lodgepole, Logan East RW, Loup City (2), Lower Republican NRD, Lyman, Lyons, Madrid, Magnet, Malcolm, Malmo, Martinsburg, Maxwell, Maywood, McCool Junction, Meadow Grove (2), Merna, Anselmo, Milligan, Minatare, Monroe, Moorefield (2), Morrill, Murray, Neligh, Nelson, Nemaha, Nemaha County RW #2, Oakdale, Oakland, Orcahrd, Orleans, Papillion, Pawnee County RW #1, Paxton (2), Petersburg, Pierce, Ponca, Primrose, Randolph, Ravenna, Raymond, Red Cloud, Richardson County RW #2, Riverdale, Royal, Rulo, Seward, Schuyler, Shelby, Sherman Lakes Homes Association, Spalding, Springview, Stanton County SID #1, Stella, Shubert, Stromsburg, Stuart, Superior, Sutton, Talmage, Tecumseh, Tekamah (6), Tobias, Ulysses, Urban Utilities, Valentine (Go Bid Red!), Valparaiso, Verdigre, Virginia, Waco, Wahoo, Walthill, Wausa, West Knox Rural Water, West Point, Western, Wood Lake, Woodcliff Lakes, Yutan!

There were 171 letters sent to Senator Nelson from the systems listed above and there were a total of 251 signatures on those letters. In addition, 191 individuals signed a group letter to Senator Nelson at the conference. This brings the total number of signatures to 422! NeRWA is grateful to you. For our organization it really comes down to this: NeRWA's strength is in its membership. Thank you.

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