



Dry-Redwater Regional Water Authority
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January 1, 2017

Honorable Thomas J. Rooney
United States House of Representatives
2160 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Rooney:

I write in great support of your efforts to modify the current “Earmark Moratorium” to ensure the policy does not apply to proposed water resources development projects of the Bureau of Reclamation or the Army Corps of Engineers.

The Dry-Redwater Regional Water Authority (DRWA) of Montana was created in 2004 to plan for a regional drinking water system that will provide safe, clean water to the residents of the eastern Montana counties of Dawson, Garfield, McCone, Prairie, and Richland, in addition to McKenzie County, North Dakota. Initially, the Water System was planned to serve 15,000 residents but with the recent incorporation of additional towns, including Sidney, it can now bring clean drinking water to almost 30,000 people in eastern Montana.

The Dry-Redwater Regional Water Authority has worked for over 11 years with the Bureau of Reclamation and has spent nearly \$4 million (from federal, state and local sources) to bring this DRWA Water System to fruition. After years of numerous studies, feasibility drafts and reports were submitted, the DRWA was recently told by the USBR Great Plains Regional Director that the Bureau will continue to communicate and work us only if the project is Congressionally authorized.

In 2014 then U.S. Representative Steve Daines (R-MT) introduced H.R. 4420, The Authorized Rural Water Projects Completion Act. Again in 2015 U.S Representative Ryan Zinke (R-MT) introduced similar legislation entitled The Clean Water for Rural Communities Act, H.R. 3867. This legislation **authorizes** the Department of the Interior (Bureau of Reclamation) to carry out two Montana water projects including the Dry-Redwater Regional Water Authority System.

However, the authorization of our Water System seems to fall under the House Earmark Moratorium and the Natural Resources Committee has declined to schedule a hearing to consider this legislation for the past four years -- effectively “killing” this legislation in the U.S. House of Representatives. Please know that the exact same legislation introduced in the U.S. Senate was passed out of Subcommittee and the full Energy and Natural Resources Committee, as the Senate does not consider the authorization of our Water System to be an earmark.

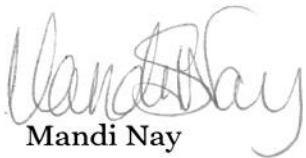
Please know the House legislation to authorize our Water System appropriates **no** funding for the project; instead it simply authorizes the system so that we may “get in line” at the Bureau of Reclamation for future federal funding. We find the fact that an authorization bill falls under an Earmark Moratorium very frustrating, as earmarks generally deal with appropriating dollars to projects. Our legislation does not even ask for funding.

The public water supply systems within our project boundaries presently are unable to meet the requirements of the Safe Drinking Water Act without expensive energy-intensive treatment options. According to the Montana Department of Environmental Quality, our public water supply system is out of compliance with the Federal Clean Water Act due to levels of secondary contaminants – sodium and total dissolved solids. Many of our constituents either boil their tap water or haul in tanks of water to supply their families.

We need federal authorization of the System to even be considered for future funding by the Bureau of Reclamation. Authorization will also allow the State of Montana to contribute funding to construction so that we can begin to lay water pipes. We turn to our Congressional delegation for assistance, but find that our U.S. Representative is prevented from moving the legislation we need to become an authorized rural water system project.

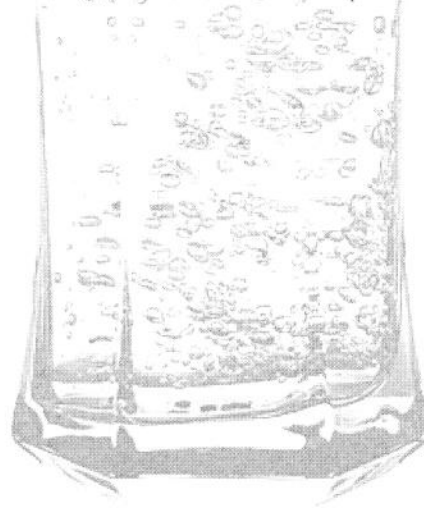
Therefore, we are very much in support of your efforts to modify the current U.S. House of Representatives “Earmark Moratorium” to ensure the policy does not apply to proposed water resources development projects of the Bureau of Reclamation or the Army Corps of Engineers. On behalf of the Dry-Redwater Regional Water Authority, please amend the Moratorium so that our constituents may have clean, safe drinking water in Eastern Montana.

Sincerely,



Mandi Nay

DRWA Coordinator



cc: U.S. Representative Ryan Zinke