

Lead & Drought Regulations

Water crises influence Washington, D.C., politics

By Kathleen Fultz

With 2016 well underway, there are several water bills and regulations on the table at the state and federal levels. Two topics receiving national attention are drought relief and lead in drinking water.

New Approaches to Drought

As small communities struggle to supply clean drinking water during the drought, California has looked to point-of-use and point-of-entry (POU/POE) technologies as feasible solutions. The state legislature reinstated regulations allowing the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) to award permits for POU/POE treatment in lieu of centralized treatment by a public water system. The POU/POE systems would be owned by the water utility, which has the option to contract out the installation and maintenance. On April 1, SWRCB approved emergency regulations and now is working on a permanent version.

Conditions in California and other western states also are being considered in Washington, D.C. Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) introduced Senate Bill 1894 to address drought conditions in the West. One component includes grant money to support small water systems. The implementation of POU/POE technologies is listed under eligible projects.

In the House of Representatives, Rep. Marlin Stutzman (R-IN) introduced House Bill 1160—the Safe, Affordable, Viable, and Efficient Water Supply Act—also called the Savings Act. The legislation’s goal is to help federal, state and local governments provide clean drinking water in rural or secluded areas through well water systems as a cost-effective alternative to centralized water systems. This



could help millions of people and promote the practice of using well water systems to deliver safe drinking water by supporting local governments and nonprofit organizations applying for federal drinking water grants and loans.

Better Notification

Currently, the Water Quality Assn. is tracking more than 100 bills, 33 of which concern lead. Senate Bill 2466, introduced by Sen. Gary Peters (D-MI), and House Bill 4414, introduced by Rep. Daniel Kildee (D-MI), propose amendments to the Safe Drinking Water Act that would require public water systems to send public notifications when lead levels in drinking water exceed limits set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The action level for lead is 0.015 mg/L. If the public water system or state does not notify the public, EPA must step in and send the notice within 15 days.

Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-OH) is focusing on what happens when a high lead level is detected in a public water supply. His bill would require the state with primary enforcement to provide a short-term remedy for lead, including bottled water or a water filtration system to each affected household no later than seven days after the public notice is released.

As the water treatment industry continues to be part of the solution and provide best practices and technologies to keep water safe, it is important to remain informed on water quality issues. Staying apprised of the political landscape helps prepare for changes that might be on the horizon. **WQP**

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