

By Robert Gray

## Proposal for Enhancing Security Advances

Bipartisan legislation now moving through Congress would provide \$12 million a year over five years to find ways to enhance the security of the nation's water infrastructure.

Key committees of both the House and Senate have cleared similar measures and overwhelming final approval by the respective houses was anticipated, as was President Bush's signature.

The bills would provide research grants to determine the most effective ways of preventing, detecting and responding to physical and cyber threats to the water supply system.

Rep. Sherwood Boehlert, R-N.Y., chairman of the House Science Committee, that sent the measure to the floor, said that countering terrorism required that "we must look beyond the needs of the moment and figure out long-range strategies to outwit terrorists."

Rep. Roscoe Bartlett, R-Md., a committee member, noted that the bill "provides necessary steps to protect our nation's drinking water supplies from biological or chemical attacks." He added that it also "focuses attention on the astounding fact that only one percent of the water that we make safe for drinking is actually drunk," while the other 99 percent is used for washing, waste disposal, and lawn and garden maintenance.

"If we take steps in the future to decentralize and focus our water purification efforts on the water people drink, we will make our large reservoirs less attractive targets for terrorists," Bartlett said.

## Top Water Official Sees Industry Consolidation

EPA's top official on water issues says that some water supply systems will most likely lack the capacity needed to sustain high-quality service at reasonable rates.

G. Tracy Mehan, III, assistant EPA administrator for water, commented in a recent speech to the National Rural Water Association in Washington, D.C. He said the industry faces challenges of growth, repair, replacement and compliance. "As operations become more complex and as customer demands increase in degree and scope, some water systems will find it increasingly difficult to succeed financially, to meet water quality goals consistently or even to sustain operations."

While most systems will continue to do a good job, he continued, "many will seek help, and some will even seek to combine with other systems. We are already seeing a trend toward consolidation in the industry."

## AMWA Says DWSRF Offers No Help on Infrastructure Needs

The Drinking Water State Revolving Fund offers no relief to large water systems facing massive infrastructure needs, a key

congressional panel on legislation affecting the nation's water supply has been told.

Harold J. Gorman testified on behalf of the Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies (AMWA) before the water subcommittee of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, which is exploring the gap between available funding and actual needs for restoring the infrastructure for water supply and treatment.

The Drinking Water State Revolving Fund, he said, "is predominantly focused on solving small system compliance problems."

Directly or indirectly, he told the subcommittee, some 57 percent of the revolving fund is targeted to smaller systems while "most large-city infrastructure needs are many times larger than the entire state allocation."

Gorman, who is executive director of the Sewerage and Water Board of New Orleans, La., said that meeting infrastructure needs in his home city without federal grants over the next five years would require increases of 50 and 90 percent, respectively, in drinking water and sewer rates. Such increases, he said, would threaten the economic stability of the community.



## Contracts on Pathogen Removal Awarded

Two Texas companies have been awarded EPA contracts for the final development and commercialization of new technologies to remove pathogens from drinking water supplies.


JCP Technologies, Inc., Austin, and Lyntech Inc., College Station, will be working on different methods to detect and identify *Cryptosporidium*, a potentially lethal microorganism that can contaminate water supplies.

EPA said that JCP Technologies portable biosensor "has the potential to provide the possibility of rapid, sensitive and low-cost field testing for these drinking water pathogens" and Lyntech's method could be expanded to areas other than water testing.

## Agreement Reached on Major Remedial Action

The city of Baton Rouge and East Baton Rouge Parish in Louisiana have agreed to a civil settlement under which they will end years of sewage overflows.

The remedial action will take 13 to 15 years and could cost up to \$461 million, the Environmental Protection Agency said in announcing the settlement between the two jurisdictions on one side and the federal and state governments on the other.

Under the settlement, the two jurisdictions will reduce by more than 1.2 billion gallons annually discharge of untreated sewage to public areas and U.S. waters. The city and parish jointly own and operate a sewage collection and treatment system. 

Washington Correspondent Robert Gray can be reached at 540-972-7028; e-mail, rtgray@adelphia.net.