

SAFE DRINKING WATER: CHALLENGE OF THE 80s

(Text of a speech before the Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies on March 29, 1984
 by Senator Dave Durenberger (R-MN), Co-Chairman, National Water Alliance.)

Leadership of the National Water Alliance

The eight founding members of the Executive Committee of the NATIONAL WATER ALLIANCE form the nucleus of a 30-member Board of Directors, representing all aspects of America's water world, public and private sectors, corporate and nonprofit interests, geographic and partisan concerns.



Representative Robert Roe
Co-Chairman (D-NJ)

"Very few Americans have yet come to realize the intricacies and magnitude of the water resource problems that confront us today. The very future of America depends on a continued, adequate supply of clean, usable water."



Representative Thomas Foley
(D-WA)

"We are all in the water business. Not only is water essential to each of us in our daily lives, it is crucial to our national life—it is the life's blood of agriculture and indispensable to industry, energy and transportation."



Representative John Paul Hammerschmidt
(R-AK)

"Water is a vital and precious natural resource that must be managed in the wisest possible manner. The National Water Alliance can assist in advancing this objective through its symposiums and public information and education dissemination activities."



Congressman Dick Cheney
(R-WY)

"In the West we say our life has been written in water. Today, we see our past becoming the nation's future."

My work on groundwater problems over the past year convinces me that preventing pollution is the best way of protecting the quality of our drinking water. The water suppliers of this nation are going to have an impossible task in providing quality water unless the rest of the nation becomes convinced that it is cheaper to keep the resource clean than it is to treat a polluted resource before human consumption.

Congress passed the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) in 1974 during a period of widespread national concern over the quality of the water we drink. We were finding a growing number of contaminants in drinking water which posed immediate and long-term health threats to our population. Congress determined that uniform national standards were necessary to protect public health.

The SDWA was one of the last environmental programs to go on the books in an environmental decade. Like the bills to prevent air and water pollution, regulate the disposal of hazardous waste, to protect endangered species and preserve wilderness areas, the Safe Drinking Water Act is an ambitious law. But its implementation has been, in many respects, disappointing. We have today, nearly ten years after enactment, essentially the same handful of drinking water standards established by the Public Health Service in the 1960s. From a national perspective, little has been done about those exotic chemicals that focused the nation's attention on drinking water in the early 70s.

Most of you in the water supply business work hard to earn the public's confidence. I am sure you share my disappointment in the implementation of the SDWA. We need a comprehensive set of drinking water standards based on sound health science. It appears that we will need to amend the Act to insist that EPA promulgate those standards at an early date. And we need to remove the clutter of public notification requirements, so that when the public is alerted to a health problem they will be motivated to provide the budget and technical resources necessary to get the problem solved.

I will be offering three basic sets of amendments to the SDWA; one on storage tanks, one on groundwater protection, and a basic set of changes to the drinking water act itself.

Let me start with storage tanks. Until EPA invented the acronym LUST for leaking underground storage tanks, they weren't getting much attention. All of the nation's concern was focused on landfills and other waste disposal sites that were contaminating groundwater. But LUST is, if anything, a bigger problem. GAO recently did a study of contamination incidents. They found that 38% of the contamination incidents were caused by underground petroleum and gasoline storage tanks. Another 27% were caused by leaking tanks containing industrial chemicals. That means that 65% of the contamination incidents came from tanks. Only 13% were attributed to landfills and hazardous waste dumps. Dumps we regulate to a fare-thee-well.

Experts have estimated that there are between 75,000 and 100,000 leaking tanks in the country. A leak of only 1 gallon a day from a single service station is enough to pollute the water of a 50,000 person community to 100 parts per billion.

A second set of amendments will deal with the groundwater protection in a more general way. Although groundwater today is an essentially pristine and uncontaminated resource, pollution is increasing, especially in urban areas. What we hope to get through a groundwater protection program is an ounce of prevention, rather than pounding your industry with cures.

We need to encourage the states to develop a coherent strategy to protect their groundwater resources, identify and map aquifers, and determine their current and potential use as drinking water or industrial and agricultural sources. We need a thorough understanding of the flow and recharge characteristics of the aquifers containing quality water. We need to consider surface activities in sensitive recharge areas and how those activities may potentially contaminate the groundwater resource.

The amendments will be modeled on a similar planning and identification process that the committee developed for non-point sources of surface water pollution last year. The Federal government will provide financial assistance to those states which develop plans and programs to protect groundwater. At this time we see no direct federal regulatory role.

The amendments that I will introduce begin with a statement of goals and objectives for the Act. The principal goal is that public water supply systems provide drinking water that is free of any contaminants that may have any adverse effect on public health. This has been a controversial goal in the past. That controversy is behind us. We should also state our intention to protect underground sources of drinking water from contamination. Congress expressed this goal for surface waters in the Clean Water Act. We will do the same for groundwater in the drinking water act and begin to make it the generic statute for this resource.

Monitoring is the third major problem in our drinking water program. Every system, large and small, should be checked for the whole list of chemicals at least once. The national and state governments will need to provide financial assistance to make sure that gets done. But after the initial test, I think we can focus the monitoring process on the few contaminants which are or are most likely to be a problem for each system. The notification requirements should be tied to the frequency and severity of violations and their potential for adverse health effects.

I hope that the collective result of these amendments is to provide you with the tools you need to protect and treat the essential commodity that you provide for the American people—clean, safe water.

Thank you for being here today and for your continuing commitment to the health of our nation.



Senator Dennis DeConcini
Chairman
(D-AZ)

"Reacting on a crisis by crisis basis simply isn't good enough. The National Water Alliance gives us all—the businessman, the scientist, the public official, the consumer, a chance to act. The problems are indeed serious, but this nation is rich in expertise, knowledge, and imagination. The alliance will provide the bipartisan leadership and direction."



Senator Dave Durenberger
Co-Chairman (R-MN)

"It seems to me that few people are interested in environmental matters until there is an irreversible crisis at hand. In light of current trends, it won't be long before a lot of folks are concerned about our water resources and water quality."



Senator Robert Dole
(R-KS)

"Rather than wait until a crisis is upon us, the time is now for a National Water Alliance to focus attention on water problems and assist in the development of a sound national policy."



Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan
(D-NY)

"You can live without oil, you can even live without love... but you cannot live without water."

Membership Contribution Card

NATIONAL WATER ALLIANCE

50 E Street SE • Washington, DC 20003 • (202)646-0917

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What is the National Water Alliance?

ORGANIZATION

The NATIONAL WATER ALLIANCE was organized by eight Members of Congress who have recognized the critical need to develop a *national water policy* through a bipartisan coalition of leaders in the public, private, and academic sectors. The ALLIANCE is a forum for debate and research on water problems and provides a clearinghouse for the dissemination of studies, research programs and conference proceedings.

The founding members comprise the *Executive Committee* of the Board of Directors:

Senator Dennis DeConcini (D-AZ), *Chairman*
 Representative Robert Roe (D-NJ) *Co-Chairman*
 Senator Dave Durenberger (R-MN), *Co-Chairman*
 Senator Robert Dole (R-KS)
 Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-NY)
 Representative Thomas S. Foley (D-WA)
 Representative John Paul Hammerschmidt (R-AK)
 Representative Dick Cheney (R-WY)

EXECUTIVE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Assisting in the founding of the ALLIANCE and serving as members of the Executive Advisory Committee are Senator James Abdnor (R-SD); Representative Silvio O. Conte (R-MA); Senator Peter V. Domenici (R-NM);

Senator John Heinz (R-PA); Senator J. Bennett Johnston (D-LA); Representative Walter B. Jones (D-NC); Representative Arlan I. Stangeland (R-MN); Representative Morris K. Udall (D-AZ); Representative Jamie L. Whitten (D-MS); and Representative James C. Wright Jr. (D-TX).

ORGANIZATION DETAILS

The NATIONAL WATER ALLIANCE is incorporated in the District of Columbia as a nonprofit and bi-partisan educational institution and has been granted a tax-exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service under Paragraph 501(c)(3). The Board of Directors will contain up to 30 members; the eight founding board members — all Members of the Congress — comprise the Executive Committee. Directors have been selected from the medical and science communities, leaders of commerce and industry, academia, legislators, the legal profession, the public sector and government. An Executive Advisory Committee of Members of Congress (listed above) is also active. Advisory groups in project areas such as Water Management, Public Affairs, Environmental Impacts, Associations Research and Water Studies, for example, will advise the Board of Directors and Executive Committee members.

More than half of the board will come from the private sector, and a nationwide drive has started to

enlist corporate membership, as well as membership by academic and science institutions, labor unions, business and trade associations, water-concerned organizations and public interest groups.

MEMBERSHIP

Individual Membership: Annual dues \$10 to \$200.

Academic & Nonprofit Group: Annual dues \$200 or more.

Trade & Business Association: Annual dues \$500 or more.

Corporate Membership: Annual dues \$1,000 or more.

Sustaining Membership: Annual dues \$5,000 or more.

Major Donor: Annual dues \$10,000 or more.

Founding Donor: Annual dues \$15,000 or more.

PROGRAM GOALS

The Executive Committee has identified five distinct roles for the NATIONAL WATER ALLIANCE:

- Develop a practical, purposeful and dynamic *national water policy*.
- Establish a *clearinghouse* to disseminate to all publics useful and authoritative water information and data.
- Establish the framework for a multi-disciplinary *water research program*.
- Organize and carry forward *water symposiums and conferences*.

- Become a *third party convener* in regional or national water disputes to resolve such problems through voluntary negotiations and agreements; seek mediation — not litigation.
- Create a National Water Issues Program of *public information and education*, and use all media and press, publications, films, audiovisual, speakers bureau and other communications to the public and the diverse groups impacted by water.

FUTURE PROGRAMS

A national series of water symposiums started in Philadelphia on September 30, 1983, with the Academy of Natural Sciences co-hosting the two-day meeting with the National Water Alliance. The first symposium on providing public input to the design of a National Water Research Center and Information Clearinghouse was held on March 23-24, 1984 in La Jolla, California. Other symposiums include May 18-19, 1984 in St. Paul, Minnesota; September 11-12, 1984 in Washington, D.C.; and October 10-13, 1984 in New Orleans, Louisiana.

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