



WASTEWATER ACTION TIMELINE

Rep. Terri Sewell (AL-07) has worked tirelessly to secure wastewater funding so that every Alabama resident, especially those in Alabama's 7th Congressional District, has access to basic wastewater sanitation.

- On February 11, 2020, Rep. Sewell introduced the Decentralized Wastewater Grant Act of 2020 to establish a grant program under the Clean Water Act, administered by the Environmental Protection Agency, to help low- and moderate-income households connect their homes to existing wastewater infrastructure or install or upgrade individually-owned decentralized wastewater systems.
- In the December 2019 government funding package, Rep. Sewell secured:
 - \$1.45 billion for rural water and waste program loans, an increase of \$50 million since 2019.
 - \$659 million for the Rural Utilities Service Rural Water and Waste Disposal Program Account.
 - \$545 million for water and waste grants for clean and reliable drinking water systems.
 - \$5 million for Sewell's Rural Septic Tank Access Act, which passed in the 2018 Farm Bill and will be used to provide grants to improve rural decentralized water systems and water wells. This is a new appropriation.
 - \$5 million for a pilot program to provide grants to a regional wastewater consortium to fund technical assistance and construction of regional wastewater systems by engineering experts at University of Alabama, University of South Alabama and Auburn University. The new program will benefit historically impoverished communities that have had difficulty installing traditional wastewater treatment systems due to soil conditions. [Link to press release.](#)
- On June 25, 2019, the House passed the FY2020 Agriculture Appropriations bill, which included \$718 million in federal funding for rural water and wastewater grants and loan programs that Rep. Sewell helped to secure. Included in the \$718 million was \$15 million specifically allocated to expand funding for the Rural Septic Tank Access Act and an amendment Rep. Sewell introduced to prioritize USDA's ongoing efforts to address inadequate wastewater infrastructure in rural and unincorporated communities,

specifically those where families or individuals have straight-pipe septic systems or failing decentralized sewage treatment systems. [Link to press release.](#)

- On March 6, 2019, Rep. Sewell addressed the wastewater crisis in Alabama's Black Belt during a meeting of the Ways and Means Committee. [Link to press release.](#)
- On December 18, 2018, Rep. Sewell sent a letter of support to the CDC for a grant application submitted by the Pediatric Infectious Diseases Division at UAB to conduct a project entitled "Cross-sectional Cohort Study to Determine the Prevalence of Soil Transmitted Helminth (STH) Infections in School Age Children in a Rural Poor Community in Southern Alabama."
- On December 12, 2018, the House passed the Farm bill, which included Sewell's Rural Septic Tank Access Act. The bill provides grants for the construction and repair of decentralized wastewater systems in underserved areas. [Link to press release.](#) The Farm Bill was later signed into law by the President.
- On November 16, 2018, Rep. Sewell announced a \$23.4 million in USDA funding to help with Uniontown's Wastewater treatment system. [Link to press release.](#) This funding was made possible because of the funding increase the Rep. Sewell helped secure in the FY2018 omnibus in March.
- On July 30, 2018, Rep. Sewell hosted a wastewater infrastructure tour in Lowndes County for engineering, rural development, and public health stakeholders. The group toured homes and met with families living with failing septic systems. [Link to article.](#)
- On June 19, 2018, Rep. Sewell presented at Columbia University for the Columbia World Projects' First Forum on Inequality on the gap in reliable, affordable water and wastewater services in the United States. Consequently, Columbia World Projects invested in rural wastewater projects in the Black Belt that are currently being conducted.
- On July 17, 2018, Rep. Sewell sent a [letter](#) to UN ambassador Nikki Haley addressing concerns over comments made by Haley and outlined the need for stronger wastewater infrastructure in rural areas. [Link to press release.](#)
- On May 21, 2018, Rep. Sewell and Sen. Jones held a health fair to raise awareness about the health consequences associated with failing septic systems and wastewater contamination and provide residents an opportunity for safe and confidential health screenings. [Link to press release.](#)
- On May 16, 2018, Rep. Sewell and Rep. Rogers introduced the Rural Septic Tank Access Act which provides grants for the construction and repair of decentralized wastewater systems in underserved areas. [Link to press release.](#) It was later included and passed into law as a provision in the 2018 farm bill.
- On April 25, 2018, Rep. Sewell wrote an [op-ed](#) in The Hill that called for action into the deteriorating wastewater infrastructure crisis. [Link to press release.](#)
- In November 2017, Rep. Sewell toured the spray fields and land field in Uniontown with the Black Belt Citizens Group. She subsequently requested public health data from the

Alabama Department of Public Health for the citizens who are impacted by the poor industrial and residential wastewater infrastructure in Uniontown.

- On March 22, 2018, Rep. Sewell was successful in securing an additional \$1.8 billion in funding for USDA's water and wastewater infrastructure programs in the House's FY2018 Agriculture Appropriations bill. That funding was secured in the FY2018 Omnibus, which was signed into law. [Link to press release 1](#) and [2](#).
- On February 22, 2018, Rep. Sewell visited with residents of Lowndes County and toured their properties to see failing and homemade septic tanks firsthand. [Link to tweet](#).
- On August 12, 2015, Rep. Sewell and the Secretary of Agriculture, Tom Vilsack, toured projects in the 7th District and announced funding for wastewater and septic projects. [Link to press release](#).
- On May 16, 2014, Rep. Sewell hosted a meeting with the Alabama Department of Environmental Management, the City of Uniontown, USDA, and Sentell Engineering to get an update on the advancement of the wastewater treatment plant in Uniontown.
- In 2013, Rep. Sewell helped White Hall secure a \$1 million grant and \$112K loan through the Rural Water and Waste Disposal Program (USDA) which they used to connect 50 homes and businesses to municipal lines.
- On August 3, 2012, Rep. Sewell announced that the City of Uniontown (Perry County) was awarded \$4.8 million by USDA Rural Development. Rep. Sewell provided a letter of support for the city's grant application and was instrumental in helping the city obtain this grant. [Link to press release](#).