

**Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works
Subcommittee on Fisheries, Water and Wildlife**

Hearing

**“Innovative Financing and Funding: Addressing America’s
Crumbling Water Infrastructure”**

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Testimony

By

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Introduction

Good afternoon.

Chairman Boozman, Ranking Member Duckworth and Members of the Subcommittee, I would like to express my and my mother's gratitude for the opportunity to share our story. My name is Mike Frazee and for most of my life, my family lived without access to a safe, reliable drinking water.

It is my hope that through telling the story of my family's struggle to secure safe, reliable, drinking water that Congress will put in place policies that will bring affordable drinking water to thousands of Arkansans and millions of Americans who live in our nation's rural areas. Providing rural communities with the resources to install wells and well systems may be the single most important form of assistance our government can provide.

Setting the Stage

I live in rural, northwest Arkansas – an area of great natural beauty but where access to basic services like drinking water can be extremely difficult. Life without drinking water can be strenuous and stressful. You are constantly worried about how much water you have and how much water will be consumed in simple day to day activities. In my part of the world people drive every day, thousands of miles a year, to haul water from a coin operated water machine to their homes. And, if that water machine is broken or you have a snow or ice storm you might have to go several days without water.

Hauling water consumes many hours a week, puts tremendous wear and tear on your vehicle and has resulted in a number of deadly accidents. My dad who is a disable veteran spent much of his life hauling water to our home. My mother was constantly stressed about the water level in the tank outside our home.

Many people in our area (veterans, disabled, single parents) are down on their luck, just trying to do right and survive. These folks can't go to a bank and ask for loan to pay for a well. We don't have an opportunity to tap into city or rural water systems. Many of our neighbors struggle to have water. We have seen single moms taking their children to haul water in buckets. One also worries about the quality of the water being hauled. The water machine I used has sign that states – "we cannot insure the quality of the water." How awful is that?

Wells: A Drinking Water Supply that Works

In 2014, our prayers for a reliable, affordable source of drinking water were answered. My mother contacted Senator Boozman, who listened to our story and took action to help our family and families like ours get drinking water. Senator Boozman facilitated discussions between my mom and the Water Systems Council that resulted in the drilling of wells that brought fresh reliable drinking water directly into my mother's home and eventually into my home and our neighbors' homes.

Wells and well systems are a God Send to rural communities like mine. We were never going have the resources to pay for a drinking water treatment facility or run water lines many miles. However, wells proved to be a very cost effective alternative for me and my neighbors. The Water Systems Council, through its Water Well Trust has provided my mom, myself and families across Arkansas quality drinking water at a reasonable price, through wells.

And last year, Senator Boozman worked with Senator Cardin (thank you Senator Cardin) to have the Water Supply Cost Savings Act enacted into law – legislation requiring the USDA and the EPA set up Clearing Houses with information on the use of wells and well systems to meet rural drinking water challenges. The Water Systems Council has proven that wells can reduce the cost of providing drinking water to many rural communities by over 75 percent.

Conclusion

The "2011 EPA Needs Survey" estimated the shortfall in drinking water funding for small communities at \$64.5 Billion Dollars. As we've seen in Arkansas wells can significantly reduce the cost of providing drinking water in

many small rural communities and Congress should do everything it can to promote the use wells in these rural areas. I know firsthand the importance of safe, affordable drinking water and wells are a part of the solution.

Thanks again to Senator Boozman and Senator Cardin for your work to bring the promise of wells and wells systems to communities across rural America.

I would now like to show you a brief video documenting the role that safe, affordable drinking water played in transforming the lives of my neighbors in Arkansas.