

Perry County Awarded 3.7 Million Water Expansion Grant From USDA

Perry County Commissioner Albert Turner was notified that the Perry County Water Authority was awarded 3.7 million in grant funds from USDA on yesterday (11-7-19). Turner who sit on the Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee as Vice Chairman in NACO was notified by USDA Director, Sonny Purdue's office in Washington, D.C.

The grant will cover Districts 1&4 as it will install new water service for more than 50 households. Commissioner Turner said in a statement, " This is what moving forward is, improving basic services for residents. Providing quality drinking water is a human right that I will continue to fight for. I would like to thank the Perry County Water Authority for working with us to make this happen. Clear Water Solutions, Goodwin Mills & Cawood and the entire Board for having to vision to see this grant through. Teamwork with willing agencies within Perry County is a must if we are going to continue our progress. This grant will start on highway 5 North in District 1, outside the Marion City limits and end in District 4 on old County Road 45, (Albert Turner and Jimmie Lee Jackson Highway)."

The project will be let, and construction will begin in mid-February and be completed by July of 2020.

Commissioner Turner has also begun working on putting together an indigent water payment program. This plan will help families they are living 150% above the federal poverty line. Below is an example of the income limits that would be affected by the proposed plan:

Household/ Family Size	100%	150%
1	\$12,140	18,210
2	\$16,460.	24,690
3	\$20,780	31,170
4	\$25,100.	37,650

The Water Billing Relief program will provide low-income residents of the Perry County Water Authority service area with a reduced rate on their water, and taxes without late payment penalties or debt collection activity, including water shut-offs. Debt relief will also be extended to those who demonstrate they can manage the reduced rate bills for one year, without any accrued balance. This reform is anticipated to help hundreds of people eligible for payment plans.

Under the proposed plan these families water service will not be disconnected for failure to pay and they would be able to pay 50% of their bill for one year and afterwards the balance will be forgiven. Turner said," the plan is not to let the poor people suffer from having a basic right to water. Clean fresh water is a necessity in life. As Commissioner for District 1, I don't want to address any more calls about water

service being cut off from our most vulnerable citizens. Our families deserve to live their lives without the constant financial stress imposed by county government. They need a pathway to compliance to be able to pay their bills,” the Commissioner said.

Commissioner Turner is hopeful that within the next couple of days he will begin talks with members of the Perry County Water Authority and seeking input from members about putting his plan into action. Commissioner Turner noted that the Water Authority has worked well with many customers, but to have a policy in place will keep it from being arbitrary.