



News | June 27, 2019

Senate Passes Bill To Expand PFAS Monitoring, Eliminate Major Source Of Contamination

The Senate recently passed a defense spending bill including a bipartisan amendment to dramatically expand efforts to monitor the scope of the PFAS contamination crisis and eliminate a major source of the contamination.

The amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act of 2020, by Sens. Shelley Moore Capito (R-W.Va.), Tom Carper (D-Del.) and John Barrasso (R-Wyo.), would add the toxic fluorinated chemicals known as PFAS to the list of contaminants tracked by the U.S. Geological Survey and require public utilities to test tap water for PFAS chemicals.



The amendment would also require manufacturers to report, through the Toxic Release Inventory, air and water discharges of many PFAS chemicals. And the defense bill will require the Pentagon to phase out by 2023 the use of PFAS-based firefighting foam and require military facilities to meet state cleanup standards.

“EWG applauds Sens. Capito, Carper and Barrasso for their steadfast, bipartisan leadership, beginning a much-needed federal response to this growing PFAS contamination crisis,” said Scott Faber, EWG’s senior vice president for government affairs. “The first step to addressing this catastrophe is knowing where PFAS pollution is coming from and understanding how far it has spread. This legislation will go a long way in doing just that. Much more needs to be done to address the crisis, but monitoring the scope of PFAS pollution will lay the groundwork for further progress.”

Currently, federal agencies and public water utilities do not routinely monitor for PFAS in water and food.

The amendment would also set a deadline for the Environmental Protection Agency to develop a cleanup standard for drinking water utilities and create a federal task force to address the threats posed by contaminants like PFAS. The drinking water standard would initially apply to PFOA and PFOS, the two most notorious members of the PFAS family, but could include other PFAS chemicals as the EPA finalizes expected toxicity reviews.

In addition, the bill directs the EPA to finalize a rule that limits new PFAS uses, provides funding to states for PFAS water treatment infrastructure, and requires EPA guidance on PFAS disposal.

“Today’s action in the Senate is a good first step, but much more needs to be done,” Faber said. “We need to address ongoing sources of PFAS pollution, including air and water discharges of PFAS and applications of PFAS-tainted sludge on farm fields, and end the use of PFAS in food packaging and everyday products. PFAS must also be designated as hazardous substances to kick-start the cleanup process in the places with the worst contamination.”

Earlier this month, EWG released a report and map identifying 475 manufacturing facilities that could be discharging PFAS. EWG also recently released FDA studies showing high levels of PFAS in food, including meat, dairy, seafood, fruits and vegetables.

On Wednesday, a number of amendments were proposed to the House version of the must-pass defense bill that would dramatically expand efforts to monitor and clean up PFAS contamination. The House is expected to vote on the legislation in July.

About The Environmental Working Group

The Environmental Working Group is a nonprofit, non-partisan organization that empowers people to live healthier lives in a healthier environment. Through research, advocacy and unique education tools, EWG drives consumer choice and civic action.

SOURCE: The Environmental Working Group