

Duckworth, Durbin, Bustos Urge EPA to Immediately Conduct Air Testing for PFAS in Illinois

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– Today, U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL)—the Ranking Member of the U.S. Senate Environment & Public Works Subcommittee on Fisheries, Water and Wildlife—along with U.S. Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Congresswoman Cheri Bustos (D-IL-07) sent a letter to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) urging it to immediately start testing air at certain facilities in Illinois for per- and polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFOS and PFOA) contamination. The letter specifically requests testing at a hazardous waste facility in Sauget, Illinois, which is in an environmental justice community and is suspected of receiving PFAS waste from the Department of Defense. Earlier this year, a report identified Chicago and the Quad Cities as communities with PFAS contamination in drinking water and PFAS has since been detected in the ground water at [Scott Air Force Base](#).

In part, the letter states: **“While Illinois EPA is currently conducting testing for PFAS in Illinois water systems with Region 5’s assistance, we know that water is not the only pathway of exposure. That is why additional information is needed to determine the full extent of exposure risk in Illinois and we urge Region 5 to provide this support.”**

It continues, “We are deeply concerned about the threat that PFAS contamination poses to our constituents and public health in this region. With Region 5’s leadership, testing air emissions for PFAS at facilities known to produce these emissions will inform our Offices and constituents on the risks that PFAS contamination poses to our state.”

Durbin and Duckworth are cosponsors of the [PFAS Action Act of 2019](#), a bill to designate PFAS chemicals as hazardous substances under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act. In November 2019, [Duckworth led a hearing](#) about maintaining state’s authority to protect waterways to better regulate the discharge of pollutants into the nation’s waterways. Earlier this year, Bustos voted to help pass the PFAS Action Act through the House as part of a package of PFAS focused legislation.

A full copy of the letter is available below and online [here](#).

Kurt Thiede

Region 5 Administrator

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

77 West Jackson Boulevard

Chicago, IL 60604-3590

Dear Administrator Thiede:

We write to urge the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 5 Office to immediately test air emissions at hazardous waste incinerators including the Veolia facility in Sauget, manufacturing facilities and other industrial sources known to emit per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in Illinois. While Illinois EPA is currently conducting testing for PFAS in Illinois water systems with Region 5’s assistance, we know that water is not the only pathway of exposure. That is why additional information is needed to determine the full extent of exposure risk in Illinois and we urge Region 5 to provide this support.

Earlier this year an independent report published by the Environmental Working Group (EWG) identified Chicago and the Quad Cities as communities with PFAS contamination in drinking water. Since then, PFAS has also been detected in the ground

water at Scott Air Force Base at levels well above EPA's screening level of 40 parts per trillion. This is the level EPA is recommended public health officials use to determine if further attention at a site is required.

As you know, PFAS is known as a "forever chemical" that does not break down when released into the environment and PFAS chemicals build up in our bodies where they can stay for decades. PFAS substances have been linked to a number of health issues, including certain cancers, reproductive harms, and reduced effectiveness of vaccines, which is a dangerous threat to the health and safety of our constituents.

We are deeply concerned about the threat that PFAS contamination poses to our constituents and public health in this region. With Region 5's leadership, testing air emissions for PFAS at facilities known to produce these emissions will inform our Offices and constituents on the risks that PFAS contamination poses to our state.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of our request.