



Durbin Discusses Detection Of Pfas Near Scott Air Force Base With Secretary Of The Air Force

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WASHINGTON – U.S. Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL), Vice Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Defense Subcommittee, today met with U.S. Air Force Secretary Barbara Barrett to discuss the detection of the two main types of Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) – PFOS and PFOA – during site inspections at Scott Air Force Base (AFB), which may be impacting off-base water wells. The Air Force is now working to determine how many water wells might be impacted, whether people are consuming the water from those wells, and measure the water for PFOS/PFOA contamination.

“I asked Secretary Barrett for an update on the Air Force’s work to learn more about the detection of PFAS at Scott Air Force Base. As the Air Force continues its work, it’s imperative the community around the base remains informed about the potential contamination of off-base water wells. We must be vigilant in protecting the public health of all those who work at Scott AFB as well as the residents living nearby,” Durbin said.

A photo of today’s meeting is available [here](#).

Last month, Durbin went to Scott AFB and was joined by Air Force leaders and local officials to discuss the detection of PFAS chemicals at the base. Durbin also joined a group of 30 Senators in sending a letter to Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Andrew Wheeler requesting he provide an updated timeline for when the EPA will implement commitments made in the agency’s plan to combat exposure to PFAS. The EPA released its plan – the PFAS Action Plan – [more than a year ago](#) – and has yet to implement many of the commitments outlined in the strategy.

Durbin has also met with U.S. Air Force Chief of Staff General David Goldfein to discuss PFAS near Scott AFB.

The Air Force has conducted surveys for PFAS-related contamination at Scott AFB in recent years, but new studies have led the Air Force to expand its investigations. According to the briefing, the Air Force Civil Engineer Center is beginning the process this month, and will complete by June 2020. The Air Force has stated that it intends to take immediate measures to protect the health of residents if further contamination is discovered.

PFAS are a class of 4,700 chemicals that are highly toxic and can be harmful at low doses. They are nicknamed “forever chemicals” as they do not breakdown easily and can accumulate in people, food, and the environment. PFAS has been linked to serious illnesses, including several types of cancer, birth defects, and thyroid disease.

Durbin and U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) 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*. Durbin is also a cosponsor of the *Clean Water Standards for PFAS Act of 2019*, which tasks the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) with regulating PFAS under the *Clean Water Act* and sets new standards restricting the flow of PFAS into surface waters. Duckworth led efforts on the Senate Armed Services Committee to secure provisions in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020 that direct the Department of Defense (DOD) to identify the scope of PFAS contamination on DOD installations and work to gradually eliminate the use of certain PFAS chemicals.

Over the past two years, Durbin helped increase funding for PFAS-related clean-up, research, and mitigation work at and near military bases to \$483 million through the Senate Appropriations Defense Subcommittee.

In April 2018, Durbin wrote to then-EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt expressing concerns of PFAS contamination on military bases and calling for a Maximum Containment Level.