

Durbin, Colleagues Call for Inclusion of PFAS Provisions in Final FY21 NDAA

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WASHINGTON – U.S. Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL), Vice Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Defense Subcommittee, joined Senator Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) in leading a bipartisan letter on behalf of 19 other Senators today to Senate and House Armed Services Committee leadership urging the inclusion of several provisions in the final fiscal year (FY) 2021 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) to prevent and address per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) contamination. The NDAA is the annual defense legislation that authorizes the United States' national defense programs and priorities for the fiscal year. The Senate and House passed FY2021 defense bills earlier this year and leadership from both committees are currently negotiating a final version of the bill to be considered by both chambers of Congress before going to the President to be signed into law.

In their letter, the Senators underscored the adverse health effects tied to PFAS chemicals, two of which – perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS) – have emerged as widespread contaminants to the drinking water sources of military bases across the country due to their use in aqueous firefighting foam (AFFF) used by the military. They argued that the serious health implications tied to these chemicals coupled with unknown long-term health effects demands action from Congress and the attention of the Department of Defense.

The Senators wrote, “We acknowledge the ongoing efforts of the Department of Defense (DOD); however, additional action is needed to address the immediate concerns of citizens near these military bases who are desperate to know what exposure to these contaminants means for their health and the health of their families.”

The Senators closed their letter with a request for House and Senate committee leadership to include a number of provisions in the FY21 NDAA to confront PFAS contamination at military installations in our communities. These provisions include an amendment to the Senate bill that authorizes \$15 million to continue the PFAS health impact study established in the [FY2018 defense bill](#), as well as provision that would require PFAS blood testing for service members during their annual periodic health assessment (PHA) if it is determined they were stationed at one of the more than 600 military installations contaminated by PFAS. The Senators requested that this provision not only be retained in the final bill, but that it be expanded to include testing for military families and veterans who served on contaminated bases.

Their letter can be read in full [here](#).

In addition to Durbin and Shaheen, the letter was signed by Senators Todd Young (R-IN), Maria Cantwell (D-WA), Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), Maggie Hassan (D-NH), Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), Gary Peters (D-MI), Michael Bennet (D-CO), Edward J. Markey (D-MA), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Tina Smith (D-MN), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), Bernie Sanders (I-VT), Bob Menendez (D-NJ), Cory Booker (D-NJ), Martin Heinrich (D-NM) and Bob Casey (D-PA).

Durbin is a cosponsor of the *Providing Financial Assistance to States (PFAS) for Testing and Treatment Act*, which would provide substantial federal funding for PFAS remediation in drinking water, and groundwater, including private wells. Durbin is also a cosponsor 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*, and 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.

Earlier this year, the Air Force detected PFAS during site inspections at Scott Air Force Base (AFB), which may be impacting off-base water wells. Since then, Durbin has been pushing for immediate measures to protect the health of residents, including increasing funding for PFAS-related clean-up, research, and mitigation work at and near military bases to \$483 million through the Senate Appropriations Defense Subcommittee.