



COMMITTEE ON
ENERGY & COMMERCE
DEMOCRATS
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Pallone Remarks at PFAS Contamination Hearing

“We need a binding, enforceable, and strong drinking water standard.”

Washington, D.C. – *Energy and Commerce Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ) delivered the following opening remarks today at a Subcommittee on Environment hearing on “Perfluorinated Chemicals in the Environment:”*

I thank the Chairman for calling this hearing, and the witnesses for being here today. PFAS contamination is a very serious issue, affecting communities nationwide.

We will hear today from some of those communities. I urge my colleagues to listen closely to the firsthand accounts of the harm these chemicals can cause. These health issues include multiple types of cancers, impaired childhood development, reproductive issues, hormone disruption, increased cholesterol levels, and immune system issues.

Americans across this country are being injured right now by these chemicals, and it seems that more affected communities are being discovered all the time.

This hearing is a good start, but the communities affected by PFAS contamination need more than just a hearing. They need real solutions and real action from the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Defense. The impacted states need more than just summits and unenforceable advisories.

We need a binding, enforceable, and strong drinking water standard.

Democrats on this Committee have been pushing to set a deadline to promulgate a strong drinking water PFAS standard for several years.

Recently, we have heard calls for alternative approaches to address these chemicals from communities and experts who don’t believe EPA’s regulatory process under the Safe Drinking Water Act will actually work. It isn’t hard to see why.

In 2016, the EPA released a health advisory for two chemicals in this category at 70 parts per trillion. We know this level is too high to protect public health. States have known it for years and have set their own standards much lower.

Yet, millions of Americans currently receive water that exceeds even this weak standard. And, the problem is spreading – the more water systems we test for PFAS, the more contamination we find.

Earlier this year, the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry drafted a report identifying hazardous effects well below the EPA health advisory standard. Instead of acting on this information to protect public health, the EPA and the White House worked to block publication of the report. The Trump Administration feared the "potential public relations nightmare" more than the public health nightmare facing many communities today. This is yet another outrageous example of the Trump Administration ignoring the health needs of the American people.

We have seen these delay tactics before, particularly with another drinking water contaminant spread by the Department of Defense, namely perchlorate. Next month will mark a decade since EPA determined that a drinking water standard for perchlorate was needed, and we still have yet to see a proposed rule.

Some may say that these troubling actions show that the Safe Drinking Water Act won't work, but I think Congress can make it work. Congress should play a central role in setting the timeline for developing the PFAS drinking water standard and in ensuring that the standard is truly protective of public health. I hope this hearing is a sign that Committee Republicans are finally beginning to share this view.

Additional actions under other environmental laws may be needed to fully address this contamination and support these communities.

I hope that this Subcommittee can work together, quickly, to address PFAS contamination and implement some of the solutions we will hear about today.

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