

Sen. Hansen and Sen. Miller: State Legislators introduce PFAS standards

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Madison – State Senators Mark Miller (D-Monona) and Dave Hansen (D-Green Bay), State Representatives Chris Taylor (D-Madison), Melissa Sargent (D-Madison) and Staush Gruszynski (D-Green Bay) introduced the CLEAR Act (Chemical Level Enforcement and Remediation Act) to address the growing issue of PFAS, per-and polyfluoroalkyl substances, contamination in Wisconsin’s environment at an event in Green Bay with Governor Tony Evers and DNR Secretary-designee Preston Cole.

“Each spring, Earth Day is a stark reminder that our work protecting our natural world is not done,” said Sen. Mark Miller. “This year, we are taking action to address an emerging threat to our environment and health.”

PFAS refers to a family of similar substances found in common household products such as stain- and water-repellent fabrics, nonstick products, polishes, waxes, paints, cleaning products, and fire-fighting foams. Contamination found in municipal wells in the City of Madison and private wells in more rural areas like Marinette make it clear action is needed at the state level. PFAS pose a known substantial threat to environmental health and human health, including types of cancers and causing serious developmental risk to children.

“It is our responsibility as elected officials to act when we learn of new threats to public health,” said Senator Dave Hansen. “This legislation gives Wisconsin the

tools it needs to figure out where the contamination is, what's causing it and making sure it gets cleaned up.”

The CLEAR Act directs the DNR to establish acceptable levels and standards, monitoring requirements and response actions for PFAS chemicals that are determined by the Department of Health Services to be harmful to human health for drinking water, groundwater, surface water, air, solid waste, beds of navigable waters and soil and sediment.

“We must take steps to protect the health of our communities. This legislation aims to do just that by directing the DNR to implement standards immediately after the Department of Health Services makes a health standard recommendation,” said Representative Melissa Sargent. “There is no time to waste when it comes to the health and safety of our children.”

PFAS have been found to have an impact on cholesterol, low infant birth weight, immune system effects, cancer (PFOA) and thyroid hormone disruption (PFOS). <https://www.epa.gov/pfas/basic-information-pfas> People can be exposed to PFAS in a number of ways including contaminated soil and water and food packaging.

“Governor Evers declared 2019 the Year of Clean Drinking Water because like us, he believes that every Wisconsin resident has a right to safe, clean drinking water in their home,” said Rep. Gruszynski. “Unfortunately, many communities in our state have concerning levels of PFAS in their drinking water. We thank the Governor for supporting this bill, which would enable us to take immediate steps to address this emerging environmental and public health threat affecting thousands of Wisconsin citizens.”

The initial list of chemicals includes PFOA, PFOS, PFHxS, PFNA, PFBS, PFHpA. The Department of Health Services expects to have recommendations of PFOA and PFOS in the coming weeks.

“We must act now to address this environmental and public health threat,” said Rep. Chris Taylor. “The consequences for communities are too great.”

The CLEAR Act is currently circulating for co-sponsorship in the State Legislature.