

Both houses approve new restrictions on PFAS-containing firefighting foams

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A bill that would create a wide-ranging ban the use of firefighting foams containing a chemical that contaminates groundwater is on its way to the governor's desk after passing both legislative houses today.

The proposal would ban the use of perfluoroalkyl or polyfluoroalkyl substances, known as PFAS, except in emergency circumstances or for testing purposes when the facility has adequate cleanup materials.

Both houses passed it today by voice vote.

Still, Dems in the Assembly introduced an amendment that would've expanded PFAS protections from the chemicals beyond firefighting foams but it was rejected along party lines.

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Rep. John Nygren, R-Marinette, said the amendment would've killed an otherwise bipartisan bill.

"Unfortunately you're playing politics with my constituents and their safe drinking water," Nygren said.

Rep. Katrina Shankland criticized the bill, saying that it "really only prevents future contamination just related to firefighting foam" and that it does not address containment or prevention for PFAS from other sources or already in the environment.

The Stevens Point Dem said “the worst thing that could happen” today would be the passage of this bill without any followup legislation addressing PFAS contamination.

Dem Senators raised similar concerns during their floor session.

PFAS is a term for a group of man-made chemical substances used in commercial and industrial products since the 1940s. They do not break down easily in the environment or when consumed by animals. And some are known by DNR and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to be potential health hazards in humans.

Gov. Tony Evers through Executive Order 40 established a PFAS Coordinating Council and Assembly Speaker Robin Vos, R-Rochester, also created the Speaker’s Task Force on Water Quality to find solutions for limiting exposure to the chemicals.

Firefighting foam and nonstick cookware are some of the more common products still using PFAS today.

See more:

<https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/2019/related/proposals/ab323>