

Sen. Cowles: Bill to prevent PFAS pollution signed into law

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MADISON– Senator Robert Cowles (R-Green Bay) released the following statement after 2019 Senate Bill 310, authored by Senator Cowles and Representative John Nygren (R-Marinette), was signed into law as 2019 Wisconsin Act 101:

“This new law will reduce the impact that PFAS compounds have on Wisconsin residents and the environment by banning the unconfined use of this firefighting foam with intentionally-added PFAS except in emergencies. Act 101 creates the necessary balance between reducing the dangers to human health and negative environmental footprint these chemicals pose while also preserving the ability of first responders to use an extremely effective tool to fight flammable liquid fires.”

Act 101 addresses one of the primary sources of per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) pollution. This new law bans the use of firefighting foams with intentionally-added PFAS for training as training foams without PFAS can still properly prepare our first responders. Act 101 still allows the use of class B firefighting foam for true emergencies as PFAS-containing foams are the most effective at addressing the dangerous circumstances that can arise from flammable liquid fires on a highway or runway, at a factory, or elsewhere.

“Real environmental progress often comes one step at a time. While Act 101 isn’t the whole answer to PFAS contamination in Wisconsin, coming together and finding common solutions to address this issue must start with restrictions on the use of PFAS firefighting foams that will prevent more pollution. I’m pleased that the Governor weighed the merits of this bill over misleading and false political rhetoric when deciding to sign this into law.”

The new regulations in Act 101 will be complimented by 2019 Senate Bill 717, if

passed and signed into law, which funds a clean sweep program to collect and safely dispose of unused and unwanted PFAS-containing firefighting foam. This legislation is authored by Senator Cowles, Representative Timothy Ramthun (R-Campbellsport), and others as part of the Speaker's Task Force on Water Quality.

Senator Cowles has also introduced 2019 Senate Bill 774 and 775 to establish PFAS Management Zones in Wisconsin with Senator Jerry Petrowski (R-Rome) and Representatives Joel Kitchens (R-Sturgeon Bay), Jeff Mursau (R-Crivitz), Todd Novak (R-Dodgeville), and Scott Krug (R-Rome). These bills zone in on the worst cases of PFAS contamination in Wisconsin to gather more information for ongoing administrative and legislative actions. These bills are also **the only** bills introduced that can provide clean drinking water to those impacted.