

# Dept. of Justice: AG Kaul urges swift Senate action against toxic “forever” chemicals

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MADISON, Wis. – Attorney General Josh Kaul joined a coalition of 19 attorneys general from around the nation in urging the U.S. Senate’s Environment and Public Works (EPW) Committee to strengthen public health and environmental protections against “forever chemicals.” These chemicals — a class of highly toxic chemical compounds known as poly- and per-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) — are widespread, persistent contaminants in the environment, including in drinking water, in many states.

In a [letter](#) addressed to EPW leadership, the coalition argues that the serious dangers posed by PFAS, combined with the tens of millions of taxpayer dollars that coalition states are currently spending to protect residents from these dangers, call for swift congressional action.

“PFAS contamination is impacting Wisconsin communities right now,” said Attorney General Kaul. “We need Congress to act swiftly to protect the health of Wisconsinites and clean water from these highly toxic chemical compounds.”

In their letter, the coalition is urging the EPW Committee to “pass or build on” the bipartisan PFAS Action Act of 2021, passed by the U.S. House of Representatives in July. Specifically, the letter identifies several legislative priorities of the coalition states, including:

- Promoting the prompt and effective cleanup of PFAS by designating the chemicals as “hazardous substances” under the federal Superfund law,
- Protecting public health by designating PFAS as “hazardous air pollutants” under the federal Clean Air Act and prohibiting the unsafe incineration of the chemicals,
- Protecting public health by establishing national drinking water standards for PFAS and controlling PFAS discharges,
- Providing funding for drinking water suppliers to cleanup PFAS in their drinking water,
- Providing funding to states to protect against and respond to PFAS contamination,
- Making medical screening available to all U.S. Department of Defense personnel and members of the public who may have been exposed to elevated levels of PFAS, and
- Prohibiting the use and limiting the storage of PFAS-containing firefighting foam at federal facilities.

PFAS are man-made chemicals that have been used to produce countless consumer products since the 1940s, including textiles with Scotchgard; Teflon products, including non-stick cookware; food packaging; and waterproof clothing. Firefighting foam containing PFAS has also been used for decades by the U.S. military, airports, industrial facilities, and local fire departments. PFAS are estimated to be detectable in the blood stream of 99 percent of the U.S. population.

PFAS generally appear to be highly toxic to humans and animals, and they are extremely resistant to degradation in the environment — that is why PFAS are known as “forever chemicals.” Although scientific knowledge regarding PFAS is still developing, some PFAS are linked to serious adverse health effects in humans and animals. Exposure to the two most studied types of PFAS are associated with kidney and testicular cancer, thyroid disease, liver damage, immune system effects, and other conditions.

Joining Attorney General Kaul in sending the letter to the Senate EPW Committee are the attorneys general of California, Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Virginia, Washington, and the District of Columbia.