

Gov. Evers, State Legislators: Announce legislation to address statewide PFAS contamination

Posted on Wednesday, Apr 21, 2021

>> WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)

LA CROSSE — Gov. Tony Evers, together with State Senator Melissa Agard (D-Madison) and State Representative Samba Baldeh (D-Madison), reintroduced Wisconsin’s Chemical Level Enforcement and Remediation (CLEAR) Act for the 2021-23 legislative session in La Crosse today. The city of La Crosse and town of Campbell have recently been impacted by PFAS contamination on French Island in La Crosse County. The governor was also joined at the press conference by State Sen. Brad Pfaff (D-La Crosse), State Rep. Jill Billings (D-La Crosse), State Rep. Steve Doyle (D-Onalaska), and town of Campbell Board Member Lee Donahue.

The CLEAR Act, [LRB-2927](#), gets to work to address statewide PFAS contamination and includes several provisions that are in the governor’s Badger Bounceback agenda. Among many others, these provisions include funding new positions at the DNR specific to the implementation of a PFAS action plan, creating the PFAS municipal grant program for testing and remediation efforts by local governments, funding statewide monitoring and testing initiatives, collecting and disposing of PFAS contaminated firefighting foam, and establishing and enforcing environmental standards for PFAS.

“Every Wisconsinite, no matter where they live, should be able to trust the water from their tap. Period,” said Gov. Evers. “Unfortunately, as the folks here on French Island know and households across the state know, that’s not the case. The CLEAR Act gets to work and tackles PFAS with an immediate, comprehensive, and unified response, and I am glad to support this legislation today to continue our work to ensure everyone has access to clean drinking water in Wisconsin.”

The CLEAR Act was introduced in the 2019-21 biennium but the bill was never given a public hearing.

“Water is life – having access to clean, usable water is a human right and is vital to the success of any community,” said Sen. Agard. “The CLEAR Act takes the necessary, but aggressive steps to address PFAS contamination across the state, while providing local governments with funding to start the lengthy process of ridding our water of forever chemicals.

“Wisconsin has a long heritage of holding high standards for our outdoor spaces and water sources. The CLEAR Act gets us back to those roots by making Wisconsin the gold standard for water quality. This bill is the most comprehensive piece of PFAS legislation in the nation. It’s time Wisconsin leads on this issue. We should all be on the same side when it comes to clean water and it should not matter whether you are a Democrat, a Republican, or an Independent. I am calling on all of my colleagues to sign on to this important legislation and follow Governor Evers lead in addressing PFAS in the state of Wisconsin.”

“In my community in Madison we had our well water shut off due to PFAS contamination. We learned about the problem due to a group of vigilant residents that demanded information and accountability from local officials. While we have been able to work to address the PFAS, we don’t know how long the water was contaminated and we don’t know the long-term impact of our exposure,” said State Rep. Baldeh. “That is why I am proud to stand with the governor today and put forward a proposal to address PFAS that will provide communities the tools and resources to find out if their water is safe and if it’s not safe, to address the problem. We will not stop until we know that everyone in Wisconsin has access to safe and healthful water.”

In addition to supporting the CLEAR Act, Gov. Evers has taken several actions throughout the course of his administration to address PFAS in the state of Wisconsin, including declaring 2019 the Year of Clean Drinking Water, prioritizing investments to protect ground, surface, and drinking water, and working alongside governors and stakeholders from across the Great Lakes region to address this issue. He also signed [Executive Order #40](#) establishing the Wisconsin PFAS Action Council, which is a collaborative effort across state agencies to help address the issue of PFAS in our state. Additionally, the governor’s [2021-23 biennial budget](#) proposes significant resources for the monitoring and testing of PFAS including over \$20 million over the next two years for assistance and resources to local communities that are impacted by PFAS contamination, aiding local fire departments in disposing of PFAS foam, and adding additional DNR staff to implement

the [Wisconsin PFAS Action Council's action plan](#).

[PFAS](#), per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, are a group of human-made chemicals used for decades in numerous products including non-stick cookware, fast food wrappers, stain-resistant sprays and certain types of firefighting foam. These contaminants have made their way into the environment through spills of PFAS-containing materials, discharges of PFAS-containing wastewater to treatment plants and certain types of firefighting foams.

PFAS do not break down in the environment and have been discovered at concentrations of concern in groundwater, surface water and drinking water. They are also known to bioaccumulate in fish and wildlife tissues and accumulate in the human body, posing several risks to human health.