

Clean Wisconsin: Senate PFAS bill amendment falls short, but broad support remains for critical component of the bill

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Today Senate republicans released an amendment to Senate Bill 312 aimed at addressing concerns that the bill would result in PFAS being treated differently than other hazardous substances under the Spill's Law. As written, the bill could limit the Department of Natural Resource's ability to test and order remediation of PFAS on private property. Unfortunately, today's amendment fails to fully address those concerns.

Clean Wisconsin Government Affairs Director Erik Kanter had this to say about the amendment:

"We are disappointed the amendment did not address DNR's concerns over unnecessary limits on its authority to test and require mitigation for PFAS contamination. We want to see the legislature, DNR, and Governor's office continue to work through those issues. However, we know there is broad bipartisan support for the Municipal Grant Program provision in the bill. We call on the legislature to introduce the Municipal Grant Program as a standalone piece of legislation, pass it, and send it to Governor Evers for his signature so the state can start sending the \$125 million the Joint Finance Committee allocated for PFAS to the communities who need it. They should not be forced to wait for help any longer."

The municipal grant program would help cities, towns, villages, counties, and water utility districts test water supplies for PFAS and install treatment systems or other upgrades to help keep the hazardous chemicals out of drinking water.

PFAS (or per-and-polyfluoroalkyl substances) are a class of thousands of different chemicals, many of which are still being manufactured and used in a wide variety of products, like non-stick pans, fast food wrappers, carpets, upholstery, firefighting foam, shoes and clothing. The harmful chemicals have made their way into waterways across Wisconsin, prompting the DNR to issue numerous fish consumption advisories. PFAS have also been detected in municipal drinking water systems and private water wells in many communities including Eau Claire, La Crosse, Madison, Rhinelander, Marshfield, Manitowoc, French Island, Marinette, Peshtigo and Wausau. Studies have shown that high-level exposure to PFAS is associated with suppressed vaccine response, increased risk of some cancers, increased cholesterol, and increased risk of high blood pressure in pregnant women.