

May 10, 2019

The Honorable James Inhofe
Chairman
Senate Committee on Armed Services
228 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Adam Smith
Chairman
House Committee on Armed Services
2216 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Jack Reed
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Armed Services
228 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mac Thornberry
Ranking Member
House Committee on Armed Services
2216 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Inhofe, Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Reed, and Ranking Member Thornberry:

We, the undersigned organizations, urge Congress to pass legislation to phase out the military's use of toxic firefighting foams. Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) used in military firefighting foams have all too often contaminated our drinking water. PFAS pose a serious threat to human health; research suggests links between PFAS exposure and a host of human health ailments, including cancer, immune system deficiencies, high cholesterol, and low fertility, as well as developmental issues in children and infants.ⁱ

As these firefighting foams dissolve in the environment, PFAS chemicals enter ground and surface water—persisting there indefinitely. At least 126 military sites in the U.S. have identified drinking water or groundwater contamination from harmful levels of perfluorinated chemicals, endangering human health.ⁱⁱ Cleanup could cost as much as \$2 billion, a cost that could easily rise if pollution continues.ⁱⁱⁱ

While it is clear that we must clean up existing contamination, the military exacerbates the problem by continuing to use these toxic foams. Until the Department of Defense (DoD) replaces these firefighting foams with safer alternatives, DoD unnecessarily endangers drinking water for both service members and the civilians they protect.

We know that DoD can transition to safer alternatives. The U.S. military has issued a policy to phase out fluorinated foams for training purposes, a first step which we commend.^{iv} For firefighting purposes beyond training, viable fluorine-free foams that meet high-level extinguishment parameters are already on the market—and have been successfully adopted by other militaries.^v In any cases where existing alternatives are not viable for the U.S. military, Congress should appropriate sufficient money so that DoD can quickly develop and deploy new alternatives within three years to complete this task—a reasonable amount of time to harness American ingenuity in a fight to save American lives.

Unfortunately, DoD does not appear to be moving with the necessary urgency to address the root cause of PFAS water contamination from its bases. A timeline should be required to drive DoD's efforts. We therefore ask Congress to pass legislation now that will ensure our military swiftly and safely transitions away from all PFAS chemicals within three years, ensuring safe drinking water for servicemen, their families, and surrounding communities.

Sincerely,

Air Force Sergeants Association	Environment Ohio
Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments	Environment Oregon
American Sustainable Business Council	Environment Rhode Island
Breast Cancer Prevention Partners	Environment Texas
Cahaba River Society	Environment Virginia
Citizens for Safe Water Around Badger	Environment Washington
Clean Water Action	Freshwater Future
Climate Hawks Vote	GreenCAPE
Ecology Center	GreenLatinos
Endangered Species Coalition	Hip Hop Caucus
Environment America	IAFF Local F88
Environment Arizona	Illinois Council of Trout Unlimited
Environment California	Junction Coalition
Environment Colorado	League of Conservation Voters
Environment Connecticut	Merrimack Citizens for Clean Water
Environment Florida	Natural Resources Defense Council
Environment Georgia	Ohio Environmental Council
Environment Illinois	PennEnvironment
Environment Iowa	Pennsylvania Council of Churches
Environment Maine	Rural Coalition
Environment Maryland	Safer Chemicals Healthy Families
Environment Massachusetts	Save EPA
Environment Michigan	Sierra Club
Environment Minnesota	Southern Environmental Law Center
Environment Missouri	Toxic-Free Future
Environment Montana	Toxics Action Center Campaigns
Environment Nevada	TREA: The Enlisted Association
Environment New Hampshire	U.S. PIRG
Environment New Jersey	Union of Concerned Scientists
Environment New Mexico	UPSTREAM
Environment New York	WE ACT for Environmental Justice
Environment North Carolina	Wisconsin Environment
	Your Turnout Gear and PFOA

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- i "PFAS Health Effects." 10 Jan. 2018, <https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/pfas/health-effects.html>.
- ii "Addressing Perfluorooctane Sulfonate (PFOS) and Perfluorooctanoic Acid (PFOA)," Department of Defense Report, Mar. 2018. https://partner-mco-archive.s3.amazonaws.com/client_files/1524589484.pdf
- iii "DoD: At least 126 bases report water contaminants linked to cancer," Military Times, 26 Apr. 2018, <https://www.militarytimes.com/news/your-military/2018/04/26/dod-126-bases-report-water-contaminants-harmful-to-infant-development-tied-to-cancers/>
- iv "Senate Environment and Public Works Committee By: Ms. Maureen" 28 Mar. 2019, https://www.epw.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/6/7/67c68fd5-51cc-428a-84b3-d1e5ba24003a/A3FA1B8E226E7F10059BAF4452A4A938.sullivan-testimony-03.28.2019.pdf.
- v "The Global PFAS Problem: Fluorine-Free Alternatives as Solutions - IPEN." 29 Apr. 2019, https://ipen.org/sites/default/files/documents/the_global_pfas_problem-v1_5_final_18_april.pdf.