

SUPPORT HB2189 - PFAS Testing in State Waters

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Overview:

This legislation requires industrial users of publicly owned treatment works to test waste streams for PFAS prior to and after cleaning, repairing, refurbishing or processing items that contain PFAS. It also requires prompt testing for PFAS following the discharge of certain toxic agents into state waters and requires the results of tests to be submitted to the coordinator of emergency services.

- A PFAS chemical called GenX was found in the Roanoke River upstream from the Spring Hollow Reservoir uptake. Almost three years later, The Roanoke Times reported, in September 2022, that there were high levels of the chemical in the river, risking contamination of the public water reservoir which serves about 69,000 customers in the Roanoke Valley. EPA advises no more than 10 ppt (parts per trillion) of GenX in drinking water, and the sampling found 139 ppt. After subsequent testing, it was announced that the water is safe to drink. The culprit was identified and the toxic release ceased. This legislation would provide immediate safety measures and would protect people's health across the state of Virginia. This recent incident underlines the harm that could occur with a delay in reporting test results, or with no incentive to report.
- PFAS substances are known as "forever chemicals" as they persist and do not easily break down. They are used in a long list of commonly used products, such as non-stick cookware, food packaging, cosmetics, carpets, and waterproofing of outdoor gear. PFAS chemicals migrate into the air, dust, food, soil and water. They enter our human bodies when we ingest foods, drink water and other beverages, and breathe airborne particles. Most humans now have PFAS in their systems.
- Studies show that PFAS accumulates in the body and can cause health problems. People are at risk of contracting illnesses, which include liver damage, thyroid disease, obesity, hormone suppression, decreased fertility and cancer.
- The US Environmental Protection Agency is considering measures to address this enormous health situation, and have made recommendations to limit the use of PFAS. Yet, the EPA recommendations are not mandatory. Therefore, many states have enacted regulations to prohibit or restrict the use of PFAS. Virginia now has a restriction on firefighting foam, which contains large amounts of PFAS, and more legislation is anticipated to curtail the uses of PFAS in Virginia.



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