

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 19, 2025

The Honorable Pete Hegseth
Secretary of Defense
Department of Defense
1300 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Secretary Hegseth,

We write to express our concerns regarding the Department of Defense's (DoD) decision to delay the cleanup of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) contamination at military installations across the country.¹ This is unacceptable. For years, communities contaminated by PFAS from nearby DoD installations in our states have waited for the DoD to take action.² We request that the Department reverse its decision, return to the previous timetable released in December 2024, and accelerate efforts to remediate confirmed PFAS contamination.

PFAS are a class of synthetic chemical substances that have been manufactured for decades for use in various consumer products and industrial processes. However, the strong chemical bonds in PFAS that make them useful in the manufacturing of certain goods also make them extraordinarily persistent in our bodies and the environment, earning PFAS the label of a "forever chemical." Already, PFAS have been found in drinking water sources for at least 172 million people across the country. Exposure to PFAS has been linked to a litany of public health risks, including various cancers, reduced immune function, reproductive challenges, birth defects, and thyroid problems.³

There are over 700 military sites with known or suspected PFAS contamination from DoD activities.⁴ According to reporting, DoD's new timetable delays cleanup of PFAS pollution at approximately 140 sites, and in some instances, the delay will be nearly a decade.⁵ Studies confirm that residents living near many of these sites have dangerously high levels of PFAS in their drinking water, putting them at risk for serious health issues linked to PFAS exposure.⁶

¹ Hiroko Tabuchi, "Defense Department Delays Cleanup of 'Forever Chemicals' Nationwide," *Washington Post*, September 23, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/09/23/climate/military-defense-pfas-forever-chemicals-cleanup-delay.html>.

² Hannan Norman and Patricia Kime, "Inside the Pentagon's Painfully Slow Effort to Clean Up Decades of PFAS Contamination," *KFF Health News*, December 27, 2023, <https://kffhealthnews.org/news/article/pentagon-defense-department-pfas-contamination-cleanup-slow/>, as republished in *Military.com*, <https://www.military.com/daily-news/2023/12/27/inside-pentagons-painfully-slow-effort-clean-decades-of-pfas-contamination.html>.

³ "How PFAS Impacts Your Health," Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, July 22, 2025, <https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/pfas/about/health-effects.html>.

⁴ "721 Military Sites With Known or Suspected Discharges of PFAS," Environmental Working Group, data current as of August 2025, <https://www.ewg.org/interactive-maps/2020-military-pfas-sites/map/>.

⁵ Tabuchi, "Defense Department Delays Cleanup."

⁶ Patricia Kime, "'Forever Chemicals' in Thousands of Private Wells Near Military Sites, Study Finds," *KFF Health News*, November 29, 2023, <https://kffhealthnews.org/news/article/forever-chemicals-pfas-private-wells-military-bases/>.

PFAS from these sites have also contaminated surrounding groundwater and soil, hurting the livelihoods of farmers and ranchers.⁷ Further delaying cleanup will only increase the health and economic costs to servicemembers and communities across the country.

We are also alarmed that DoD lacked transparency when changing the timeline for remediation. Servicemembers, their families, and the communities surrounding contaminated military installations need to be able to make informed decisions about their health. Given the current and continuous impact on these servicemembers and communities, please provide answers to the following inquiries by December 1, 2025:

1. What is the reason for delaying cleanup at each of the DoD installations with confirmed PFAS contamination?
2. How did DoD communicate with impacted bases and surrounding communities to notify them of the change in cleanup timetables?
3. What resources will be provided to the communities currently exposed to PFAS and dangerous drinking water to mitigate ongoing exposure due to the delay in remediation?
4. What water quality monitoring will DoD conduct in impacted communities?

We again urge you to reverse your decision to delay cleanup timelines and prioritize remediation of PFAS contamination at bases to protect the public health of military families across the country.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

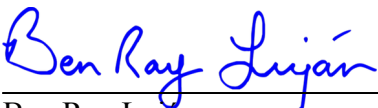
Sincerely,



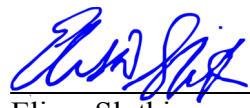
Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator



Ben Ray Lujan
United States Senator



Elissa Slotkin
United States Senator

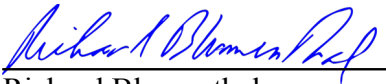
⁷ Joce Stermann, Alex Brauer, and Andrea Nejman, "Military warns farmers nationwide about PFAS contamination that threatens their livelihood," *WJLA*, August 5, 2021, <https://wjla.com/news/spotlight-on-america/military-warns-farmers-nationwide-about-pfas-contamination-that-threatens-their-livelihood>.



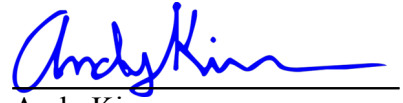
Adam B. Schiff
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Andy Kim
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



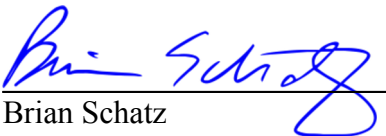
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Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin
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Jacky Rosen
United States Senator



John Fetterman
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Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



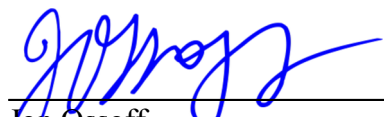
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