

PFAS Exposure Assessment and Documentation Act

The PFAS Exposure Assessment and Documentation Act would statutorily codify the PFAS Task Force established in July 2019 by Secretary of Defense Mark Esper. It would require additional blood testing for service members during their annual periodic health assessment (PHA) if it is determined they were stationed at one of the more than 600 military installations contaminated by per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). The bill would also allow for dependents of a service member who was stationed at a PFAS contaminated base to elect to get a PFAS blood test covered under TRICARE—the military health insurance.

PFAS chemicals, like perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS), have emerged as widespread contaminants in the drinking water sources of military bases across the country. In fact, PFAS chemicals have been found in the drinking water of 600 military installations nationwide. A component of aqueous firefighting foam (AFFF) used by the military, PFAS materials are classified as “emerging contaminants” as their long-term cumulative effects on human health are not yet known. However, initial analyses have linked PFAS materials with birth defects, various forms of cancer and immune system dysfunction, causing great public concern for members of the military and veterans who have served at the hundreds of bases found to be contaminated with these materials.

The Fiscal Year 2020 National Defense Authorization Act included the Protect Military Firefighters from PFAS Act, which requires the Department of Defense (DOD) to include blood testing for PFAS as part of routine physicals for military fighters. The PFAS Exposure Assessment and Documentation Act would afford the same opportunity to service members and their families to have their blood tested if they have been stationed at bases with known or suspected PFAS contamination.

What the PFAS Exposure Assessment and Documentation Act Will Do

- **Codifies DOD’s PFAS Task Force.** The bill would statutorily codify the PFAS Task Force established by Secretary Esper in July 2019. Codifying the Task Force will ensure enduring departmental focus on the PFAS issue.
- **Requires PFAS blood testing for service members.** The bill would require PFAS blood testing of a service member during their annual periodic health assessment (PHA) if it is determined they were stationed at one of the more than 600 military installations contaminated by PFAS. This information would be required to be recorded in the service member’s medical record and added to a registry.
- **Makes available PFAS blood testing for military families.** The bill allows for dependents of a service member who was stationed at a PFAS contaminated base to elect to get a PFAS blood test covered under TRICARE—the military health insurance. It would also require DOD to cover the cost of a former service member and their family to elect to get a PFAS blood test, if they are no longer covered under TRICARE, but were stationed at PFAS contaminated military base during their career.