

SAFE DRINKING WATER ASSISTANCE ACT

Led by Senators Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) and Rob Portman (R-OH)

The Safe Drinking Water Assistance Act (S.1251) is important legislation to strengthen Federal and state efforts to improve the safety of our nation's drinking water system. This bipartisan bill, introduced by Senators Jeanne Shaheen and Rob Portman, will create a national strategy to coordinate the Federal response to and scientific research on emerging contaminants, and provide assistance to states in responding to public health challenges posed by potentially harmful materials.

Safe drinking water is essential to the public health, wellbeing and economic vitality of our nation. While America's drinking water is the safest in the world, unregulated emerging contaminants, such as per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) and cyanotoxins, are increasingly being detected in drinking water systems across the country. Little is known about the long-term cumulative effects of emerging contaminants on human health, causing great public concern.

Under the Safe Drinking Water Act, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is required to routinely identify and analyze emerging contaminants and provide guidance to states, local officials and the public about the potential public health risks and acceptable contamination levels for these materials.

Unfortunately, actions by state and public water system to monitor and treat these contaminants are often delayed due to the rigorous yet lengthy nature of the EPA's multi-step review process. A lack of scientific research that adequately addresses potential health effects of emerging contaminants has also hindered EPA and state efforts to regulate the presence of these materials. Moreover, as emerging contaminants are identified in communities, many state and local agencies need additional assistance and support for testing contaminants and communicating the potential risks with the public.

There is a critical need to address exposure to these contaminants and attend to any potential adverse health effects or greater impact on our communities. The Safe Drinking Water Assistance Act would remove these barriers limiting Federal and state response to emerging contaminants, expediting the analysis of these harmful chemicals and providing much-needed guidance and support to states to help ensure that the nation's drinking water will always be safe.

What the Safe Drinking Water Assistance Act Will Do

- **Interagency task force to improve federal coordination on emerging contaminants**
 - Directs EPA and the Department of Health and Human Services to convene an interagency working group to improve Federal efforts to identify and respond to emerging contaminants.
- **National Emerging Contaminant Research Initiative**
 - Directs the Office of Science and Technology Policy to develop an interagency federal research strategy to improve the identification, analysis and treatment methods for emerging contaminants.
- **State assistance program to provide federal assistance to eligible states for the testing and analysis of emerging contaminants**
 - Directs EPA to create a voluntary program to provide federal support and technical assistance to communities that have detected emerging contaminants in their water supply.
 - Establishes and maintains a comprehensive database of resources available to assist states and water stakeholders with testing for emerging contaminants.

This legislation has been endorsed by the Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies, National Ground Water Association and the Water Quality Association.