

Support the comprehensive ban on PFAS



We won't get PFAS out of our water — or our bodies — until we get it out of products being sold in RI.

The Problem:

PFAS are a class of human-made chemicals that are incredibly persistent in the environment and also highly toxic. PFAS have been linked to cancers, reproductive harms, and other health problems. Unfortunately, they are still used in many household items like some carpets, cookware, outdoor apparel, cosmetics, and baby gear! And because they don't break down in the environment, they are now found in waterways, our bodies, and even breast milk.

With a lack of action at the federal level, it is state legislatures across the country that are pushing manufacturers to phase out PFAS. Many states have adopted PFAS restrictions for specific products, and last year, Minnesota joined Maine in passing a comprehensive ban on PFAS. In 2022, Rhode Island passed laws banning PFAS in food packaging and setting limits for PFAS in drinking water. But until Rhode Island passes a more comprehensive ban on toxic PFAS, these chemicals will continue to contaminate our waterways and our bodies.

The Solution:

*Clean Water Action is supporting legislation this year that will ban these dangerous PFAS chemicals from a range of products we use every day *before* these toxins can contaminate our bodies and the environment:*

The Comprehensive PFAS Ban Act of 2024 (S2152/H7356):

- Phases out the sale of residential carpets or rugs, fabric treatments, cosmetics, cookware, juvenile products, apparel, menstrual products, and artificial turf that contain intentionally added PFAS.
- Phases out the use of PFAS chemicals in firefighting foam, which is a leading source of PFAS contamination, and moves the state towards phasing out firefighting personal protective equipment that contains PFAS, so we can protect first responders and our groundwater.
- Requires that the presence of PFAS be publicly disclosed in any product not covered by the ban.

Why are PFAS so dangerous?

PFAS are a class of over 12,000 human-made chemicals which includes Per- and Poly- fluoroalkyl substances. These chemicals contain chains of fluorine-carbon bonds which are very stable and difficult to destroy. This makes PFAS incredibly persistent in the environment and allows these chemicals to bioaccumulate in the human body. Evidence of harm led to the phase-out of two PFAS (PFOA and PFOS), but thousands remain and science indicates that other PFAS chemicals should not be considered safe substitutes.

We are exposed to PFAS through multiple sources. For some people, the main source of contamination is through drinking water. Drinking water can become contaminated with PFAS by fire fighting foam, the discarding of manufacturing and chemical waste, and landfill leachate.



But we are also exposed through the products we use and consume every day. Use in consumer products is common because PFAS adds a grease-, oil-, and water-resistance to materials that would otherwise not have that

quality. Unfortunately, that means PFAS are found in a lot of different products including carpets, cosmetics, cookware, outdoor apparel, juvenile products, firefighting foam, and stain-resistant treatments. This is why we need the Rhode Island General Assembly to take action.

Health Risks of Exposure to PFAS

Research has linked the long-term exposure to PFAS to certain cancers including testicular and kidney cancer. Other studies on PFAS have linked PFAS exposure to thyroid problems and reproductive issues including miscarriage, preeclampsia and impaired fetal growth. The legacy PFAS chemicals PFOA and PFOS, which are still in our environment, are presumed to be immune hazards to humans, meaning they suppress the immune system. Due to the persistence of PFAS in the human body, the chemicals can accumulate over time, creating greater risk for health impacts. And because they take a very long time to break down in the environment, the sooner we phase them out of use, the better.

Are there alternatives to PFAS?

Yes! Lots of companies including Patagonia and IKEA are already voluntarily moving away from PFAS due to consumer demand for safer products! Even firefighting foam has safer alternatives. Most Rhode Island municipalities have already begun to replace their class B firefighting foam with a safer alternative that does not include PFAS.

Health Impacts of PFAS

