



Opening Statement of Ranking Member Stephanie Bice

Joint Environment Subcommittee and Research & Technology
Subcommittee Hearing: *Forever Chemicals: Research and Development
for Addressing the PFAS Problem*

December 7, 2021

Thank you, Chairwoman Sherrill and Chairwoman Stevens, for holding this joint subcommittee hearing today. And thank you to our witnesses for taking the time to testify before us.

Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances, known as PFAS, are a large and diverse family of synthetic chemicals. It's not just one product or one strand that we can say is good or bad. Each individual chemistry in the family of PFAS has its own unique properties and uses.

In fact, according to the EPA, there are approximately 650 PFAS currently manufactured or used in the United States. Many of these chemistries are essential to products driving our lives in the 21st century.

The cellphones, tablets, and computers we use every day; components of clean energy sources like solar and wind; modern medical devices that keep us healthy; sophisticated aircraft the U.S. military uses to keep us safe. In each of these, PFAS is the common denominator that makes them possible to produce.

But because of the strength and durability PFAS provides, these chemicals have a strong molecular bond that is not easily broken down or destroyed. That is why you will hear PFAS referred to as "forever chemicals." As you might imagine, a chemical that is the backbone of aqueous film-forming foam, which is highly effective at putting out the most difficult to suppress fires, is purposely designed to withstand the most extreme conditions that would destroy most other products.

That presents us with the main problem associated with PFAS: removing what is already out there. Because PFAS has been used in industry and consumer products since the 1940s, we know that exposure has already happened and we face the problem of legacy contaminations in water, soil, air, and food.

To overcome this challenge, I look forward to hearing from one of our witnesses, Ms. Amy Dindal from Battelle Memorial Institute, on her research regarding PFAS identification and destruction in the environment.

As Ms. Dindal will further explain, Battelle's development of PFAS Annihilator technology has destroyed 99.9% of PFOA and PFOS in water. This type of scalable technology should give us all comfort that economically feasible, safe, complete, and reliable destruction of PFAS is within our grasp, thus solving the most fundamental issue that comes with using these chemicals.

As we look to the future, it's important we remember not to villainize this entire category of chemicals. The hazard and risk profiles of various PFAS are immensely different. A broad, categorical ban on PFAS would be detrimental to our manufacturing sector and actually put lives at risk by reducing safety.

Using certain PFAS in a controlled, responsible manner is safe and effective. Understanding the distinct properties of each of these chemicals will allow us to continue the important uses and benefits of PFAS technologies.

At the end of the day, removing harmful PFAS from production and cleaning up legacy contaminations to protect human health is a bipartisan issue.

In 2019, the Trump Administration's EPA issued the PFAS Action Plan, which was the agency's first national research, management, and risk communication plan to address a challenge like PFAS. I was pleased to see this October that the Biden Administration's EPA released a PFAS Strategic Roadmap, which builds off the Action Plan.

In today's political environment, everything tends to be polarized, but when it comes to the common good of protecting human health, not every previous action has to be repealed and replaced. We can and should build off productive work, no matter the political party.

It is my hope that moving forward, bipartisan efforts continue and the same science-based decision making and weight of benefits are considered with any proposed regulation.

I want to again thank all of our witnesses for testifying before the Committee today and I look forward to an engaging discussion. I yield back the balance of my time.