



Opening Statement of Ranking Member Michael Waltz

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

December 7, 2021

Good morning and thank you, Chairwoman Sherrill and Chairwoman Stevens for holding today's joint subcommittee hearing. And thank you to our witnesses for your participation here today.

PFAS is the acronym for a large and diverse group of manufactured chemicals used in industry and consumer products, and valued for their strength, durability, and resilience to heat, stains, water, and grease.

PFAS make possible many of the products that power our everyday lives: from lithium batteries and solar panels for alternative energy sources, to PPE and firefighting foams used by first responders, to pipeline operations safety equipment and fuel system seals.

Additionally, PFAS are critical to military and aerospace operations. Heat and chemical resistant PFAS are used in safety equipment to protect our military in extreme environments and against chemical warfare. Insulating, chemical and weather resistant PFAS are used in hydraulic fluids for aircraft control systems, fluid seals, and aircraft communications and navigations systems.

However, what makes these chemicals so reliable is also what makes them long-lasting in our environment. That can be hazardous to human health, particularly when they pollute water supplies.

Science is determining that not all PFAS chemicals entail the same risks. I believe this signals that more research is needed to better understand the individual properties and characteristics of PFAS. Increased research can help us determine how to best remove legacy PFAS that are harmful to human health and the environment. Additional research can also lead to alternatives that retain the most valuable properties of PFAS. Solutions are out there, but they require research to fully understand and implement. There are multiple R&D efforts across federal science agencies to advance PFAS innovations. Despite these efforts, critical knowledge gaps still remain regarding our ability to detect PFAS, understand their effects, and identify viable alternative options. A coordinated federal effort, in partnership with the private industry, is needed to help us close these gaps.

A concern about PFAS that hits close to home for me as a combat veteran is hearing of elevated levels of PFAS in groundwater on military bases and the health risk this poses to our military members and their families. PFAS have been an issue in my home state of Florida, including the district to my south represented by our colleague on the Science Committee, Mr. Posey.

While the high concentrations are mostly due to the use of Aqueous Film-Forming Foam Concentrates to put out fires quickly and effectively, replacing this foam with a reliable non-PFAS alternative has proven incredibly difficult.

That is why I'm eager to hear from our witness, Ms. Amy Dindal from Battelle Memorial Institute, on her work to create a product that can destroy the vast majority of PFAS in water in a scalable and cost-effective manner. Advancements such as these give us more tools in the toolbox to be able to combat toxic chemicals in our environment and improve public health.

I also look forward to hearing about the work and research our other witnesses are conducting. I'm particularly interested in hearing what they believe the greatest research questions on this topic are and what steps we should be taking to answer them.

Thank you again to our witnesses for being here today and I look forward to your testimony. Before I yield back, I request Unanimous Consent to submit a statement and questions from Representative Posey into the record.

Thank you and I yield back.