



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

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Rep. Nygren and Sen. Cowles Introduce Bill Curbing Use of PFAS Fire Fighting Foam

Madison - Upon circulation of a bill limiting the use of firefighting foam containing poly- and perfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), Rep. John Nygren (R - Marinette) and Sen. Rob Cowles (R - Green Bay) issued the following statement:

“PFAS contamination of groundwater is a serious issue in Northeastern Wisconsin and a growing problem in other areas of the state. Today, we circulated a bill restricting the use of “Class B” firefighting foam with added PFAS, a root cause of this type of contamination. It is important we work to reduce possible contamination sources in our state, and this bill is a strong step in the right direction,” said Nygren.

Under the legislation proposed by Nygren and Cowles, the use of Class B firefighting foams containing intentionally-added PFAS would be prohibited, with two exceptions. The prohibition does not apply to first responders using the foam in emergency firefighting or fire prevention operations. The foam could also be used for testing purposes, but only if appropriate containment, treatment, and disposal methods, as determined by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), are in place. The bill provides DNR with rule-making authority to set those parameters.

“These foams are an extremely effective tool for fighting flammable liquid fires. However, these foams contain PFAS which contaminate the water we drink and can have negative impacts on our health. This bill strikes a balance in reducing the risks to human health and negative environmental footprint PFAS chemicals pose, while not hamstringing first responders who need to use firefighting foams in real emergencies,” concluded Cowles.

This is the second piece of PFAS contamination response legislation authored by Rep. Nygren and Sen. Cowles this session. They collaborated earlier this year to author Assembly Bill 85/Senate Bill 109, which calls on the Department of Health Services to develop state-based groundwater standards for PFOA and PFOS. As co-chair of the Joint Committee on Finance, Rep. Nygren also plans on advocating for the inclusion of additional resources to study PFAS contaminants in the state budget.