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Rice Provision to Reimburse Long Island Communities Included in House Passage of PFAS Action Act

Bill authorizes \$50 million in grants to reimburse water districts for past PFAS contamination expenses?

Washington, July 22, 2021 | [Stuart Malec](#) ((202) 225-5516) | [0 comments](#) [f](#) [t](#) [i](#) [e](#)

WASHINGTON – The U.S. House of Representatives passed H.R. 535, the *PFAS Action Act of 2021* yesterday, a comprehensive bill to regulate PFAS chemicals and introduce stronger protections against future pollution. The legislation includes a provision authored by Rice that authorizes \$50 million in new grant funding for communities that have incurred past PFAS water contamination expenses, which include many on Long Island.

PFAS chemicals represent a serious public health risk to nearly all Americans, as the CDC has reported that nearly every American has PFAS in their blood. These chemicals have exposed countless men, women and children to life-threatening illness and disease, including multiple forms of cancer, liver disease, asthmas, thyroid dysfunction, infertility and impaired child development.

“Long Island has the most contaminated drinking water in New York State,” said Rep. Kathleen Rice. “As a result, many of our local communities could not wait around for the federal government to eventually take action. That’s why I authored this provision in the PFAS Action Act to authorize new funding to reimburse communities which have been forced to allocate significant resources to address their water contamination issues.”

According to a May 2019 study by the New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG), Long Island has the most contaminated drinking water in New York State. Several contaminants, including PFAS, were detected above the Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) safety levels.

“The public needs and deserves clean drinking water. Toxic PFAS chemicals pose a serious health risk and when detected in drinking water, immediate action is warranted,” said Adrienne Esposito, Executive Director at Citizens Campaign for the Environment. “Funding to treat drinking water supplies and remove these dangerous chemicals is a welcome victory for public health protection. This bill will have a tremendous impact on water suppliers’ ability to address legacy PFAS contamination in our communities. We need to ensure that the communities burdened with this pollution are not left holding the bill. We commend Representative Rice for standing up for clean drinking water, public health and the ratepayers.”

“The Long Island Water Conference is grateful for the leadership and actions taken by Congresswoman Rice and her colleagues in the House to secure this essential infrastructure funding,” Andrew Bader, Long Island Water Conference Chairman. “For years, Long Island’s water suppliers have been working successfully to construct the treatment systems required to remove man-made chemicals, such as PFAS, that have infiltrated our sole-source aquifer. Hundreds of millions of dollars have and continue to be spent by water providers to install state-of-the-art treatment facilities and this funding will help to offset the financial burden facing our residents.”

“As voter-elected Water Commissioners dedicated to maintaining the highest standards of water quality, we applaud the House of Representatives for passing the PFAS Action Act, an essential piece of legislation that would establish a national drinking water standard for PFOA and PFOS,” said Amanda Field, Nassau Suffolk Water Commissioners’ Association President. “Long Island Water providers have been working tirelessly to put treatment in place for emerging contaminants including PFAS & 1,4-dioxane for several years. The world’s most advanced treatment systems are being constructed right here on Long Island to remove these compounds from our drinking water, and while we’re fully committed, there is a deep economic impact. We are extremely grateful for Rep. Kathleen Rice’s support to reimburse water providers that have been proactive in keeping their drinking water of the highest quality as it will provide much needed relief to Long Island ratepayers.”

“The American public has the basic right, and expectation, that when they turn on their taps, their water will be clean and safe to drink - but PFAS pollution jeopardizes the very basic life necessity of clean water,” said Liz Moran, Environmental Policy Director for the New York Public Interest Research Group. “Over 1.4 million New Yorkers rely upon drinking water that has been impacted by PFAS pollution. Thankfully, the PFAS Action Act offers comprehensive solutions to address this toxic class of chemicals, and it is well beyond time for the federal government to act. NYPIRG applauds the House for passage of this legislation and urges for its passage in the Senate.”

“Long Island’s water providers are working tirelessly to implement treatment for emerging contaminants PFAS and 1,4-dioxane,” said Long Island Water Conference Chairman Rich Passariello. “The state-of-the-art treatment systems needed to remove these new contaminants from our water bear an enormous financial cost. We greatly appreciate Congresswoman Rice seeking an additional funding stream for PFAS treatment through her provision as it would provide much needed—and much deserved—relief to Long Island ratepayers.”

The *PFAS Action Act of 2021* directs the EPA to address PFAS contamination in several ways, including:

- Preventing further PFAS environmental contamination by requiring cleanup of contaminated sites, setting air emission limits, prohibiting unsafe incineration of PFAS, and limiting the introduction of new PFAS chemicals into commerce.
- Identifying health risks by requiring comprehensive health testing and monitoring for PFAS in drinking water.
- Requiring a stronger drinking water standard for PFAS that protects public health, including the health of vulnerable subpopulations.
- Providing funding through the PFAS Infrastructure Grant Program to assist local communities with impacted water systems.

The PFAS Infrastructure Grant Program was originally reserved for local water districts, which had yet to remedy PFAS contamination. However, several Long Island communities have been incurring PFAS-related costs for years. Rice’s provision makes funding available to these communities by allocating an additional \$25 million to the grant program over the next two fiscal years solely for reimbursing water districts that have already sustained past PFAS-related costs.

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