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# The Intelligencer

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## ***Editorial: EPA Punting on PFAS?***

We're disappointed by Monday's report by online news site Politico that the EPA will not set a drinking water standard for toxic PFAS chemicals — specifically PFOS and PFOA, which were used locally in firefighting foams at military bases and have contaminated water wells that were used by tens of thousands of residents in Bucks and Montgomery counties.

The military has spent millions providing filters and clean water in affected communities, but some residents believe the chemicals have made them sick.

Acting EPA chief Andrew Wheeler has reportedly signed off on a soon-to-be-released plan that allows the hazardous chemicals to remain unregulated by the Safe Drinking Water Act. The EPA has not addressed the report's claims, which were tied to two unidentified sources. A brief statement merely pointed out that the plan has not been finalized due to an ongoing "interagency review."

If the draft plan is approved as is, it'd be a blow to affected residents in our communities. The establishment of a drinking water standard would help protect residents and provide leverage to those whose water supplies exceed the limit and are seeking compensation.

Other options exist, though, and the EPA's failure to act means the people in charge of pursuing those options will have to earn their keep.

At the federal level, they are the members of the House of Representatives' newly formed bipartisan PFAS task force. Congressman Brian Fitzpatrick, R-1, of Middletown, co-chairs the group, which includes Madeleine Dean, D-4, of Abington and Brendan Boyle, D-2, of Philadelphia. One of the task force's key goals is creation of a formal drinking water standard. Lawmakers have said they plan to force the issue legislatively, but they can expect pushback from lobbying groups representing the chemical industry. We're glad both Fitzpatrick and Dean issued statements in the wake of Politico's report, calling on the EPA to fulfill its mission to protect drinking water.

At the state level, they are the members of the newly formed PFAS Action Team. The commonwealth is said to be hiring three toxicologists, who would be integral in setting an official Pennsylvania drinking water standard for PFAS. Before its first meeting in November, Governor Tom Wolf characterized the work of the task force as being necessary in light of the federal government's failure to enact a single national standard. The group's second meeting is set for Feb. 12 at Upper Dublin High School.

Another push for a statewide standard comes from state Sen. Maria Collett, whose 12th district includes communities surrounding two former military bases in Warminster and Horsham and a

still-active station in Horsham that used the firefighting foams. She plans to introduce a bill establishing a 10-parts per trillion drinking water limit for PFOS, PFOA, PFHxS and PFNA. She has sent a memo seeking co-sponsors for the bill.

There are hurdles that the state efforts would have to overcome. Collett's bill isn't the first to try to set a statewide standard. Rep. Tom Murt, of Upper Moreland, tried for a 5-parts per trillion limit in a previous session, but his bill stalled in committee reportedly amid pushback from water utilities.

The other issue we see is that Pennsylvania has traditionally looked to the EPA for leadership on drinking water standards. Now it's spending taxpayer dollars because it doesn't agree with the EPA's guidance, which has the added weight of being a federal agency with oversight of the Department of Defense.

It's a thorny issue. But we remain convinced that some sort of standard — preferably a federal one — needs to be established.