

The Intelligencer

RECEIVED

APR 24 2019

HORSHAM WATER AND
SEWER AUTHORITY

Pa. Sen. Maria Collett introduces two PFAS bills

By Kyle Bagenstose

Posted Apr 23, 2019 at 4:18 PM

Updated Apr 23, 2019 at 4:18 PM

Sen. Maria Collett used Earth Day to introduce two bills she says would help tackle PFAS chemical contamination in Bucks and Montgomery counties.

Sen. Maria Collett, D-12, of Lower Gwynedd, introduced two bills Monday that she says would help Pennsylvania tackle problems relating to per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, or PFAS.

As told in a special report Sunday, five years after the unregulated chemicals were discovered in local drinking water supplies, the contaminants still are causing issues for impacted municipalities and residents. Collett's first bill, S.B. 581, would create an interim drinking water standard for four types of PFAS at 10 parts per trillion, which is just a fraction of a 70 ppt health advisory level put forth by the Environmental Protection Agency.

The interim standard would remain in place until either the EPA or the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection creates an official standard. The EPA has said it intends to announce whether it will pursue an official standard for the chemicals by the end of the year, but that setting it would take several additional years. The DEP has said it will set a standard, but could take two years or more.

A second bill offered by Collett, S.B. 582, classifies PFAS as a hazardous substance under Pennsylvania's Hazardous Sites Cleanup Act. Experts say such a move could help impacted residents and communities recoup costs related to PFAS contamination and potentially give them legal standing to make polluters clean up the chemicals, particularly if a drinking water standard is also in place.

Much of the local PFAS contamination was caused by firefighting foams used by the military at a trio of former and current military bases in Horsham, Warminster, and Warrington. All three facilities are in Collett's district.

"The people of the 12th District are sick and tired of waiting for actions and answers," Collett said in a prepared statement. "I can no longer count the number of community members who have shared with me their stories of lost loved ones, personal struggles, and increased water bills. Passage of these bills will be a decisive first step toward restoring the public's confidence and ensure that everyone impacted by PFAS contamination has the resources necessary to remediate the crisis."

Bills tackling PFAS in the General Assembly have not fared well in past legislative sessions, with prior proposals to establish drinking water standards or add hazardous substances listings failing to advance past committee. But Collett said in a recent interview she believes the "tide is shifting" in Harrisburg as the chemicals are being found in more communities across Pennsylvania.