

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 7, 2019

The Honorable Andrew R. Wheeler
Administrator
Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20004

Dear Administrator Wheeler,

We write you today to ask that you expeditiously provide Long Island with greater assistance and resources to protect residents from harmful contaminants and pollutants found in our drinking water. The quality of water being supplied to Long Island homes has been seriously compromised by a unique combination of contaminants and pollutants, necessitating immediate intervention from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

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, and Nassau County has the highest number of water systems with detected emerging contaminants among New York's counties. Several contaminants, such as 1,4 dioxane and per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, also known as PFAS, were detected above the EPA's reference concentrations, which are based on health assessments.

This is concerning given the EPA's slow response to set a nationwide safe drinking water standard, which may take several years. PFAS has been widely detected in Long Island water supplies and exposure to PFAS has been linked to testicular and kidney cancers, liver damage, and developmental effects in fetuses and breast-fed infants. Many wells across Long Island have been impacted by PFAS contamination and require the installation of expensive treatment systems to address this contaminant. Typically, a carbon filtration treatment system will cost approximately \$1 million per impacted well. The New York State Department of Health estimates that statewide, 645 public water facilities will require treatment at a cost of over \$850 million with an annual operating cost of \$45 million.


Another highly dangerous contaminant in Long Island drinking water is 1,4 dioxane, a synthetic chemical found in many household products, and according to the EPA, it is likely a human carcinogen. Hundreds of wells across Long Island have tested positive for 1,4 dioxane, and it will cost approximately two million dollars per well to adequately filter out this chemical. According to the Citizens Campaign for the Environment, Nassau and Suffolk County water suppliers have seen the highest levels of 1,4 dioxane in the nation.

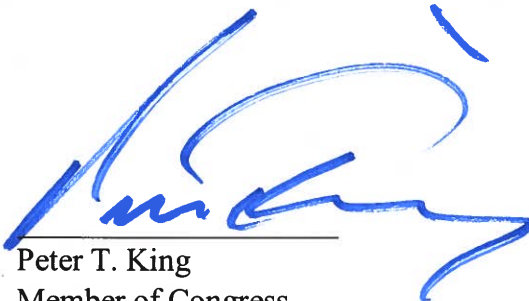
The lack of strong federal drinking water standards for 1,4 dioxane and PFAS is hardly the beginning of water-related challenges on Long Island. Water suppliers are already hard at work dealing with nitrogen run-off, trace levels of pharmaceutical drugs, dozens of Superfund sites, salt water intrusion into the aquifers, and a plume of radium associated with the old Northrup Grumman site in Bethpage.


The combination of all these challenges presents a serious threat to drinking water and public health for all Long Islanders, and we therefore urge you to develop a maximum contaminant level for PFOA, PFOS, and 1,4 dioxane as soon as possible. Also, we are requesting that the EPA provide additional financial and technical support for water providers and regulators to protect the health and well-being of Long Island families.


Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,


Kathleen M. Rice
Member of Congress


Peter T. King
Member of Congress


Thomas R. Suozzi
Member of Congress


Lee Zeldin
Member of Congress