



10844 Ellis Avenue  
Fountain Valley, CA 92708  
714.962.2411  
www.ocsan.gov

July 15, 2021

The Honorable Diane Feinstein  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Alex Padilla  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senators Feinstein and Padilla:

The Orange County Sanitation District (OC San) writes on a matter of the utmost urgency. Over the past few years, Congress has been working to develop a reasonable approach to the treatment and disposal of the Per- and polyfluoroalkyl (PFAS and PFOA) family of chemicals. There has been significant congressional debate surrounding the most appropriate approach to ensure that those responsible for the production of these chemicals are held responsible for the costs associated with any response to contaminated waters or the byproducts of wastewater.

OC San is deeply concerned that the House Committee on Energy and Commerce approved the PFAS Action Act that included provisions requiring United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) to list a portion of these forever chemicals as hazardous substances under Superfund (CERCLA) and further mandated the agency to determine whether other chemical compounds of this family should be listed.

We would also like to note that the Committee on Appropriations recently reported its Fiscal Year 2022 spending bill for USEPA. This spending bill directs the agency to pursue the listing of these chemicals as hazardous substances under CERCLA. Each of these actions would expose clean water agencies dedicated to the improvement of water quality to unknown and potentially endless (and costly) litigation related to the potential discharge of wastewater or disposal of biosolids that *might contain* PFAS chemicals. We urge you to work to ensure that agencies like OC San are provided protection from such an outcome. At a minimum, we request that you work to provide an exemption from any CERCLA liabilities similar to that enjoyed by our nation's airports.

OC San is a passive recipient of PFAS/PFOA—we are not the creators. OC San has a stringent Source Control program helping to decrease the amount of toxic pollutants entering the sewer. However, OC San is unable to discriminate against discharges of PFAS chemicals that have been defined as ubiquitous. These chemicals are part of our daily lives, ranging from the manufacturing of clothing, food or industrial production.

OC San is unable to mandate the elimination of the use of such chemicals. It is vital that the responsibility for the control, discharge and treatment of these chemicals should be the sole responsibility of the producers and managed at the source.

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Senators Feinstein and Padilla

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A decision to classify these chemicals as CERCLA hazardous substances would inevitably result in capturing agencies, like OC San, as a potentially responsible party for cleanups of contaminated waters and soils; simply because OC San was carrying out a public service, collecting and treating wastewater.

This situation is attributable to CERCLA's Joint, Several and Strict Liability regime. When CERCLA was enacted into law it was constructed to allow for cleanup of communities impacted by the indiscriminate disposal of hazardous substances at the Valley of Drums and other sites and to ensure that those responsible for the management and disposal of the chemicals would be held liable for cleanups and damages. It was never intended to assess responsibility or create an environment where legal action could be initiated against those that were not involved in the management and disposal of hazardous substances.

We note that Congress is considering legislation that would provide clean water agencies with financial assistance to implement pretreatment standards for discharges containing PFAS and to require dischargers to notify an agency of such discharges. While we appreciate this support, it fails to address the true policy and legal concern: imposing liability on public agencies that have no direct or indirect responsibility for the production, generation or discharge of these chemicals. Only through an explicit exemption from CERCLA liability can we ensure a balanced and appropriate approach to eliminate these chemicals from our environment without imposing unreasonable and unfair costs that would simply be shifted from the responsible parties to our ratepayers.

Again, we urge you to support a commonsense approach to responding to PFAS threats by maintaining responsibility at the source of PFAS.

Sincerely,



John B. Withers  
Board Chairman

"CORO Foundation Fellow, Los Angeles Class of 1979"



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July 15, 2021

The Honorable Alan Lowenthal  
The Honorable Lou Correa  
The Honorable Katie Porter  
The Honorable Michelle Steel  
The Honorable Young Kim  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Members of the Orange County Congressional Delegation:

The Orange County Sanitation District (OC San) writes on a matter of the utmost urgency. Over the past few years, Congress has been working to develop a reasonable approach to the treatment and disposal of the Per- and polyfluoroalkyl (PFAS and PFOA) family of chemicals. There has been significant congressional debate surrounding the most appropriate approach to ensure that those responsible for the production of these chemicals are held responsible for the costs associated with any response to contaminated waters or the byproducts of wastewater treatment. As the House prepares to debate the PFAS Action Act (H.R. 2467), we write to urge you to oppose any provision that would shift liability to public agencies.

OC San is deeply concerned that the House Committee on Energy and Commerce approved the PFAS Action Act that included provisions requiring United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) to list a portion of these forever chemicals as hazardous substances under Superfund (CERCLA) and further mandated the agency to determine whether other chemical compounds of this family should be listed.

Each of these actions would expose clean water agencies dedicated to the improvement of water quality to unknown and potentially endless (and costly) litigation related to the potential discharge of wastewater or disposal of biosolids that *might contain* PFAS chemicals. We urge you to ensure that any House-passed bill provides an explicit exemption from any CERCLA liabilities similar to that enjoyed by our nation's airports.

OC San is a passive recipient of PFAS/PFOA. We are not the creators. OC San is unable to discriminate against discharges of PFAS chemicals that have been defined as ubiquitous. These chemicals are part of our daily lives, ranging from the manufacturing of clothing to food to industrial production.

OC San is unable to mandate the elimination of the use of such chemicals. It is vital that responsibility for the control, discharge and treatment of these chemicals should be the sole responsibility of the producers.

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OC Congressional Delegation

July 15, 2021

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This situation is attributable to CERCLA's Joint, Several and Strict Liability regime. When CERCLA was enacted into law it was constructed to allow for cleanup of communities impacted by the indiscriminate disposal of hazardous substances at the Valley of Drums and other sites and to ensure that those responsible for the management and disposal of the chemicals would be held liable for cleanups and damages. It was never intended to assess responsibility or create an environment where legal action could be initiated against those that were not involved in the management and disposal of hazardous substances.

We note that Congress is considering legislation that would provide clean water agencies with financial assistance to implement pretreatment standards for discharges containing PFAS and to require dischargers to notify an agency of such discharges. While we appreciate this support, it fails to address the true policy and legal concern: imposing liability on public agencies that have no direct or indirect responsibility for the production, generation, or discharge of these chemicals. Only through an explicit exemption from CERCLA liability can we ensure a balanced and appropriate approach to eliminate these chemicals from our environment without imposing unreasonable and unfair costs that would simply be shifted from the responsible parties to our ratepayers.

Again, we urge you to support a commonsense approach in responding to PFAS threats by maintaining responsibility at the source of PFAS.

Sincerely,



John B. Withers  
Board Chairman



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October 18, 2021

The Honorable Alan Lowenthal  
 The Honorable Lou Correa  
 The Honorable Katie Porter  
 The Honorable Michelle Steel  
 The Honorable Young Kim  
 U.S. House of Representatives  
 Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Members of the Orange County Congressional Delegation:

Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS/PFOA) are a group of man-made chemicals created by manufacturers and despite playing no role in releasing PFAS into the environment, clean water agencies must find ways to remove them from entering our water treatment systems.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) is currently conducting research into the presences of such chemicals in biosolids and appropriate actions to address any scientifically documented findings. We note that the House passed the PFAS Action Act (H.R. 2467) in August and would if enacted impose drastic liability on clean water agencies like the Orange County Sanitation District (OC San) that have no responsibility for the presence of these chemicals in the environment.

OC San is a passive recipient of PFAS/PFOA. We are not the creators. OC San is unable to discriminate against discharges of PFAS chemicals that have been defined as ubiquitous. These chemicals are part of our daily lives, ranging from the manufacturing of clothing to food to industrial production.

I ask as you consider final legislation to address PFAS and other contaminants of emerging concern that you ensure such legislation explicitly exempts clean water agencies from PFAS cleanup costs. It is vital that responsibility for the control, discharge and treatment of these chemicals should be the sole responsibility of the producers.

Additionally, we endorse recent congressional actions that would provide federal assistance to clean water agencies to implement pretreatment programs related to PFAS management and discharge. Source control of these chemicals is the most appropriate approach to protect public health and the environment.

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PFAS  
OC Delegation  
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A clean water agency that complies with applicable and appropriate federal management and treatment standards must not be responsible for current and future costs associated with a PFAS cleanup. Under H.R. 2467, liability could be imposed for agencies that simply receive and treat water. It is vital that you secure an exemption for these agencies from the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERLA) no less than that provided to our nation's airports. OC San and similar agencies have no responsibility for the presence of PFAS and the concept of imposing CERCLA liability is not good public policy.

I call upon the Orange County Congressional Delegation to cast votes implementing these public policy positions. Please do not hesitate to contact Jennifer Cabral, OC San Administration Manager at (714) 593-7581 or via email at [JCabral@ocsan.gov](mailto:JCabral@ocsan.gov) should you have any questions.

Sincerely,



John B. Withers  
Board Chairman



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November 4, 2021

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Feinstein:

Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS/PFOA) are a group of man-made chemicals created by manufacturers and despite playing no role in releasing PFAS into the environment, clean water agencies must find ways to remove them from entering our water treatment systems.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) is currently conducting research into the presences of such chemicals in biosolids and appropriate actions to address any scientifically documented findings. We note that the House passed the PFAS Action Act (H.R. 2467) in August and the Senate has yet to act on the legislation. If enacted in its current form, H.R. 2467 would impose drastic liability on clean water agencies like the Orange County Sanitation District (OC San) that have no responsibility for the presence of these chemicals in the environment.

OC San is a passive recipient of PFAS/PFOA. We are not the creators. OC San is unable to discriminate against discharges of PFAS chemicals that have been defined as ubiquitous. These chemicals are part of our daily lives, ranging from the manufacturing of clothing to food to industrial production.

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