

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3218

Ash Carter
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Carter:

Recent testing of Washington Lake, the drinking water supply for the City of Newburgh, New York, found abnormally and unacceptably high levels of perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS) contamination. Follow-up tests showed extremely high levels of those contaminants in outfalls from nearby Stewart Air National Guard Base that discharge runoff directly into Washington Lake tributaries. As you know, PFOA and PFOS are frequently found in aqueous film forming foam (AFFF), which has been used by the Department of Defense to extinguish petroleum fires for over 40 years. Together, these facts strongly suggest Newburgh's water supply contamination is coming from Stewart Airport and Stewart Air National Guard Base.

PFOS and PFOA contamination is not a problem unique to Newburgh. The United States military is currently conducting an extensive review of military bases to test for PFOA and PFOS contamination stemming from the use of AFFF. However, the danger this contamination poses to the drinking water of such a vulnerable and underserved community elevates the urgency for action to crisis levels.

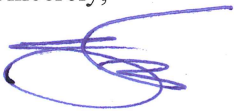
At this time, Stewart Air National Guard Base is not currently included in the military base review. I ask that you not only add Stewart Air National Guard Base to the scheduled reviews, I urge you to place Stewart at the top of the list. We must move quickly to identify the source of this pollution and get in action to stop the spread of contamination. Furthermore – I ask that you immediately engage with the community to take all steps necessary to invest in complete and total remediation.

I want to stress the urgency of action. We are running out of time. Newburgh has switched to an alternative source of drinking water, but that source will run dry in a matter of weeks. After that, the city will be forced to pursue options that will cost millions of dollars. Newburgh is a financially distressed city of nearly 30,000 people. Over one third of the population lives in poverty. Median household income lags far behind state and national averages. They cannot be asked to shoulder this burden.

In the United States, access to clean water is a right, not a privilege. Total systemic failures have denied my neighbors in Newburgh access to water. They deserve better. We must act, and we must act now.

Thank you for your service and I look forward to working with you on this.

Sincerely,



Sean Patrick Maloney
Member of Congress