

H.R.7788 – The Firefighter PFAS Injury Compensation Act of 2024

Firefighters in the U.S. face exposure to **per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS)**, commonly known as "forever chemicals," through their firefighting gear, foam, and other job-related activities. PFAS are a group of man-made chemicals that are resistant to heat, water, and oil, making them particularly useful in firefighting but also extremely harmful.

Exposure to PFAS is linked to various health issues, including cancers (kidney, liver, testicle, prostate, bladder, etc.), thyroid disease, and ulcerative colitis. These chemicals accumulate in the body over time and have been found in the blood of 97% of Americans. Firefighters, due to the nature of their work, experience particularly high levels of exposure, which greatly increases their risk of developing these health conditions.

Despite the clear dangers of PFAS, many firefighters struggle to receive appropriate compensation for illnesses directly linked to their exposure. Existing programs and insurance mechanisms often fail to address the long-term effects and financial burdens these conditions place on firefighters and their families.

What is the Firefighter PFAS Injury Compensation Act?

This legislation aims to establish a **Firefighter PFAS Injury Compensation Program** to provide compensation for firefighters suffering from PFAS-related health conditions, ensuring that those who risk their lives to protect us are taken care of when they are affected by exposure to toxic chemicals.

Key Provisions:

- Establishment of the PFAS Injury Compensation Program under the Public Health Service Act.
- **Eligibility:** Firefighters with at least 2 years of service who have been diagnosed with PFAS-related health conditions, such as cancers of the kidney, liver, thyroid diseases, and ulcerative colitis.
- **Compensation:**
 - \$250,000 for PFAS-related cancers.
 - \$50,000 for non-cancer conditions.
 - Awards may be modified based on years of service and special circumstances.
- **Claims Process:** Firefighters or their representatives can file claims to the Department of Health and Human Services, providing proof of PFAS-related diagnoses.
- **Funding:** Compensation will be funded through the PFAS Trust Fund, which will be financed by a PFAS manufacturer's excise tax and a PFAS litigation excise tax.

Why is this Bill Important?

- **Health and Safety:** Firefighters face increased risks from exposure to PFAS, with higher rates of cancers and other serious health conditions.
- **Accountability and Compensation:** This Act ensures that firefighters and their families receive the financial compensation they deserve for illnesses caused by their exposure to PFAS.
- **Long-Term Support:** The legislation establishes a dedicated fund and clear processes to ensure that injured firefighters are compensated fairly and promptly.

Endorsements: This bill is endorsed by the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF).