

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

February 10, 2020

The Honorable Mark Esper  
Secretary of Defense  
The Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Mr. Secretary:

For over a year, our delegation has pressed for swift and immediate action to address contamination of drinking water in Eastern New Mexico. After Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) chemicals were detected in public, private and agricultural water wells, we urged that treatment and filtration begin immediately along with work to characterize and prevent the spread of a plume. Unfortunately, the Department of Defense took limited action, citing a lack of legal authority to respond to contamination of groundwater by PFAS – authority that our delegation then worked quickly to provide to you. Department of Defense officials maintained that they were charged only with mitigating contamination to drinking water for human consumption.

Now, we are extremely disturbed to learn of new developments detecting PFAS in some of the approximately 80 wells that provide drinking water to the City of Clovis and its approximately 39,000 residents, causing them to shut off some of the public water supply wells in an attempt to slow the movement of the PFAS contamination plume. The appearance of these chemicals in these wells is a significant – and very unfortunate – development, particularly since the City of Clovis will likely need to rely on these wells later in the year to meet seasonal demands.

Given the gravity of the situation, the State of New Mexico requested from the state legislature approximately one million dollars in tax payer funding to delineate the PFAS plume in Clovis and Alamogordo. Our expectation is that the Department of Defense contribute to this effort and immediately open up all lines of communication with the state executive agencies, despite ongoing litigation related to this issue.

Additionally, immediate action must be taken to ensure that the City of Clovis will have the clean water they need to meet demand well into the future. To that end, we ask that you make Department of Defense resources available to both delineate the plume and begin remediating contamination. To date, the Department of Defense has already expended over \$200,000,000 in environmental investigations and responses at or near installations outside of New Mexico where

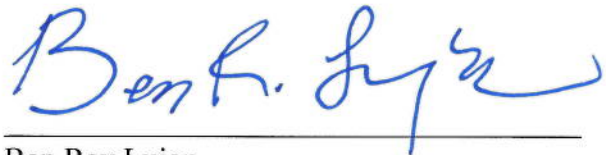
drinking water has been contaminated by PFAS.<sup>1</sup> Protecting our service members at Cannon Air Force Base and the citizens of Clovis should be prioritized as highly as these other responses.

As you are aware, we are awaiting your response on plans to use new authorities under the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020 to purchase contaminated land in order to implement filtration and treatment. These matters just became even more urgent, with new threats to New Mexico's limited water supplies and public health. Delays that allow the plume to continue to spread will only increase the scope of the long-term problem and costs to state, local and federal taxpayers. New Mexico is a proud host to three United States Air Force bases and has a rich tradition of military service, and we expect the Department of Defense to take immediate action on this serious problem to protect our citizens and our water.

Sincerely,



Tom Udall  
United States Senator



Ben Ray Lujan  
United States Representative



Martin Heinrich  
United States Senator

Cc: Administrator Andrew R. Wheeler, U.S. EPA

<sup>1</sup> GAO, Drinking Water: Status of DOD Efforts to Address Drinking Water Contaminants Used in Firefighting Foam, GAO-18-700T (Washington, D.C.: September 26, 2018).