



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James Skoufis

## Skoufis Expands Drinking Water Protections for All New Yorkers

EMMA FUENTES June 24, 2021

| ISSUE: **CLEAN WATER, DRINKING WATER, ENVIRONMENT, WATER CONTAMINATION**



Senator James Skoufis (D-Hudson Valley), water quality advocates, and local officials rallied in Newburgh on Thursday, calling on the Governor to take swift action in signing the senator's "emerging contaminants" legislation (S1759A), which establishes New York's first list of emerging drinking water contaminants and ensures new, regular testing of water supplies.

Aimed at closing a loophole in federal water testing regulations that currently leaves 2.5

million New Yorkers in the dark, the legislation mandates testing for water systems serving fewer than 10,000 residents. It also expands the number of contaminants being monitored in larger water systems statewide. By establishing its own list of emerging contaminants and universally expanding testing, New York will take a proactive approach to regulating drinking water contaminants for the first time, providing the public with critical water quality information, protecting public health, and detecting contamination sources quickly.

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*“My constituents here in the City of Newburgh know better than most what it’s like to wake up to the news that you’ve unknowingly poisoned yourself and your family just by turning on the tap,” said Senator Skoufis. “All New Yorkers deserve clean drinking water and the comfort of knowing their families aren’t in harm’s way. That’s why I’m calling on the Governor to sign this bill immediately, ensuring more contamination crises like those in Newburgh and further north, in Hoosick Falls, don’t go undetected. To do otherwise is to tell New Yorkers that their drinking water, their health, and their families don’t matter.”*

Environmental Advocates NY Director of Clean Water, Rob Hayes, said: “All New Yorkers have the right to know what’s in their drinking water. We have seen too many instances of contaminated water from Hoosick Falls to Rockland to right here in Newburgh. This bipartisan bill will finally jump-start testing for a host of toxic chemicals that New Yorkers have been waiting on for over four years. We commend bill sponsor Senator James Skoufis for prioritizing clean water and call on Governor Cuomo to immediately sign this bill into law so that millions of New Yorkers will finally know if their water is safe to drink.”

NYPIRG Environmental Policy Director, Liz Moran, said: “Every New Yorker, regardless of where they live, should know what’s in their drinking water. Following the PFOA drinking water contamination crisis in Hoosick Falls, the Governor and the Legislature did the right thing by passing the Emerging Contaminant Monitoring Act, but the Department of Health

never finished the job by creating the list of emerging contaminants. NYPIRG thanks Assemblyman Gottfried, Senator Skoufis, and the legislature, for passing this legislation. We urge Governor Cuomo to follow through on his commitment to protect drinking water quality for all New Yorkers and to sign this into law immediately; the longer there isn't testing, the longer communities may be exposed to unsafe levels of contaminants."

Food & Water Watch Senior Organizer, Eric Weltman, said: "The Cuomo administration's inadequate testing for PFAS constitutes a failure to protect New Yorkers from these dangerous chemicals. Governor Cuomo has an obligation to safeguard our water, and testing it for toxic chemicals is essential to meeting our water quality standards. We thank Senator Skoufis for his leadership on this issue, and urge Governor Cuomo to sign this important bill into law without delay."

Nobody Leaves Mid-Hudson Political Coordinator, Brahvan Ranga, said: "Access to clean water is a human right, and something that the state government has a responsibility to protect. Unfortunately, many communities around the Hudson Valley are forced to settle for contaminated water, especially lower income residents and people of color. By sponsoring and helping pass this crucial piece of legislation, Senator Skoufis has taken an important first step in ensuring that all New Yorkers have access to the clean water they deserve."

Quassaick Creek Watershed Alliance Executive Director, John Gebhards, said: "In the past, the source of drinking water for Newburgh and surrounding communities has been the Quassaick Creek and Moodna Creek watersheds, a highly developed area found to be the source of various contaminants. With this law requiring all New York public water systems to be tested for designated emergent contaminants, it takes a giant step to inform and protect all drinking water consumers. Thank you, Senator Skoufis."

Newburgh Clean Water Project Steering Committee Member, Deborah Brown, said: "In Newburgh, we have 12 PFAS chemicals in our drinking water sources and are on New York City water. Our water is threatened by releases from our local air base, from overdevelopment, and from the proposed Danskammer fracked-gas power plant. We are an environmental justice community, and we are not unique in this state. We need our own water back, cleaned and protected, and this bill, by enabling testing for emerging contaminants and identifying our water problems fully, is the first step toward getting our water sources cleaned up. We urge the Governor to quickly sign Senator Skoufis' legislation and make sure all New York communities are protected."

Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper Executive Director, Jill Jedlicka, said: "For generations, adequate testing has been lacking in areas of the Great Lakes region that are likely to be impaired. Expanded testing of emerging contaminants is critical to identify threats to public health and work to address them in order to provide clean and safe drinking water in Western NY, and for all New Yorkers. We hope to see this legislation signed swiftly so the important work can begin."

The full text of Skoufis' legislation can be found [here](#). Though most of these water tests are negligible in cost, the bill also stipulates that smaller water systems serving less than 10,000 residents be prioritized for funding assistance to ease any burden on tight municipal budgets and prevent taxpayers from footing the bill.

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RELATED LEGISLATION

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## 2021-S1759A

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- Introduced
- - In Committee Assembly
  - In Committee Senate
- - On Floor Calendar Assembly
  - On Floor Calendar Senate
- - Passed Assembly
  - Passed Senate
- Delivered to Governor
- Signed By Governor
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Relates to establishing a list of emerging contaminants

January 15, 2021

Senate Floor Calendar

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Do you support this bill?