

California Strengthens PFAS Regulations and Funding with SB 454 and AB 794

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Senator Jerry McNerney of California has introduced Senate Bill 454 (SB 454) to address the growing problem of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) contamination in California's water supply. The legislation seeks to establish the PFAS Mitigation Fund, which would provide financial assistance to local agencies and cities for the costly remediation of PFAS-contaminated drinking water. SB 454 is co-sponsored by the League of California Cities (Cal Cities) and the Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA), highlighting its broad support from municipal and water governance entities. The bill reflects California's continued efforts to combat PFAS pollution, following previous state bans on PFAS in consumer products such as food packaging, cosmetics, and children's goods. If enacted, the fund would be administered by the California State Water Resources Control Board, which would have the authority to allocate state, federal, and private funding sources—including contributions from corporate entities willing to address PFAS contamination—to provide grants or loans for cleanup efforts. SB 454 is expected to take effect on January 1, 2026, if signed into law.

The introduction of SB 454 coincides with broader legislative and regulatory developments addressing PFAS at both state and federal levels. The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) established the first-ever national drinking water standards for five PFAS chemicals in April 2024, setting legally enforceable limits to mitigate exposure risks linked to cancer, reproductive harm, and immune system dysfunction. However, concerns over potential rollbacks under the Trump Administration have prompted additional state-level legislative action. Assembly member Jesse Gabriel (D-46) has introduced Assembly Bill 794 (AB 794), which mandates the California State Water Board to implement and enforce PFAS drinking water regulations at least as stringent as federal standards while allowing for more protective state-level measures if necessary. AB 794, introduced on February 18, 2025, is scheduled for committee review on March 21. The bill aims to safeguard Californians from PFAS exposure amid ongoing legal challenges to federal regulations by water utilities and chemical manufacturers.

By combining regulatory measures with financial support mechanisms, SB 454 and AB 794 reflect California's broader strategy to address PFAS contamination, balancing public health concerns with the economic and legal complexities associated with PFAS remediation.