

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

December 20, 2024

The Honorable Lloyd Austin  
Secretary  
Department of Defense  
1000 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, D.C. 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Austin,

We write to you today with great concerns over reports that the Department of Defense (DOD) is seeking approval to incinerate polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), also known as “forever chemicals,” at a plant in East Liverpool, Ohio. This will likely affect the citizens of East Liverpool and its neighbors, including many in Western Pennsylvania who are downwind from the plant. Because of the negative health impacts this could have on our constituents, we urge you to immediately halt any plans to resume the practice of incinerating forever chemicals in Ohio, Pennsylvania, or anywhere else in the country until guarantees of safety can be made.

PFAS are a group of manufactured chemicals that, according to the EPA, “break down very slowly and can build up in people, animals, and the environment over time.” In 2022, Congress passed a law prohibiting the DOD from incinerating PFAS until they could issue guidance in line with the Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) disposal advice.

While research is still ongoing to fully understand the adverse effects of these forever chemicals, especially in children, PFAS have been linked to decreased fertility, developmental delays, cancer, and birth defects. Despite these findings, the DOD is looking to resume the incineration process in East Liverpool, Ohio, that can contaminate the surrounding soil, seep into nearby water sources, and pollute the air.

The DOD has cited improved, cleaner incineration techniques as their reasoning for this renewed appeal. The EPA, however, disagrees, and just earlier this year admitted that “uncertainties remain” about the effectiveness and safety of PFAS incineration. You should not carry out any operations in our communities without being certain of its safety.

Several questions remain unanswered: What is this new process that the DOD claims is “cleaner?” What will you do to ensure these communities are kept safe and that nothing will leach into our soil, water, and air? There must be acceptable answers to these questions before something happens that could put our constituents at risk.

We urge you to end any PFAS incineration and block any efforts to resume this in East Liverpool until the DOD and EPA can prove there is no risk to our communities' health and safety. We also implore you to work closely with local leaders of the affected communities so that they are aware of your plans and can best advocate for their interests.

Very respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Christopher R. Deluzio". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent "C" and "D".

Chris Deluzio  
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael A. Rulli". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent "M" and "R".

Michael A. Rulli  
Member of Congress