



S. 4844, the *Protecting Firefighters and Advancing State-of-the-Art (PFAS) Alternatives Act*

S. 4844, the *Protecting Firefighters and Advancing State-of-the-Art (PFAS) Alternatives Act*, introduced by U.S. Senators Martin Heinrich (D-NM), Deb Fischer (R-NE), Peter Welch (D-VT), and John Curtis (R-UT) seeks to drive the development of next-generation, PFAS-free protective gear for firefighters.

Specifically, the *PFAS Alternatives Act* would:

- Establish a grant program within the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) to fund the research, development, and testing of next-generation, toxin-free turnout gear;
- Ensure that such research is done by, and in collaboration with, firefighters and entities that understand the unique demands that firefighters face;
- Authorize up to \$25 million in FY27-FY31 for that research, development, and testing; and
- Authorize an additional \$2 million for FY28-FY32 for the development and dissemination of best practices and trainings to ensure that firefighters are equipped with the knowledge to ensure that the next-generation turnout gear is as effective as possible at reducing their risk of potentially harmful exposures.

Background

Firefighters are routinely exposed to carcinogens when they respond to virtually every type of fire or incident. This includes PFAS, also known as forever chemicals, which can be found in firefighters' turnout gear, firefighting foams, and in the smoke and air firefighters breathe. Exposure to PFAS is linked to an array of health problems, including various cancers, kidney disease, reduced immune function, and reproductive challenges.

Tragically, cancer is the leading cause of line-of-duty death in the fire service. And due to their regular exposure to carcinogens, including PFAS and other harmful chemicals in their own protective gear, firefighters are nearly 10% more likely to develop cancer and almost 15% more likely to die from cancer than the general population. Despite advances in research and materials science, there is no protective gear available to firefighters that is proven to be completely hazard-free.

The *PFAS Alternatives Act*, which is endorsed by the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF), will create a new grant program dedicated to the research, development, and testing of turnout gear that maintains effectiveness while improving firefighter safety.