

Mark A. Favors – Official Testimony to the House Oversight Committee

Thank you Chairman Rouda and the ranking member of this committee.

As an American citizen and a U.S. Army veteran, this is my official written testimony about the Department of Defense's admission in 2017, that Peterson Air Force Base without public knowledge, contaminated our drinking water with toxic perfluorinated chemicals (PFAS) linked to disease and cancer for decades, from 1970 to 2016, which caused levels found in the drinking water to far exceed the non-enforceable limit of 70 parts per trillion (ppt), and the subsequent deadly effects on my family, especially my relatives who are active duty military or veterans. In my family, we've had 16 aunts, uncles, or cousins diagnosed with cancer who had all resided in the contaminated areas for at least 10 years, unknowingly using tap water contaminated with PFAS that was eventually found to have toxic levels exceeding the EPA's non-enforceable "safe" limit.

In my family there are at least 7 military veterans who themselves, along with their spouses and children's drinking water had been contaminated without their knowledge, while they were on active duty in the US Army and/or deployed to Iraq.

This testimony will address the following points:

The Air Force ignored their own scientists warning, starting in the 1970s, about the health dangers of PFAS but kept using it.

In 1991, our local U.S. Army base banned PFAS, while across town, Peterson Air Force Base kept dumping PFAS into the drinking water source until 2015.

University scientists found that exposed residents have extremely high levels of toxic PFAS in their blood, more than 14 times higher than the national average Colorado health officials found higher than expected rates of three cancers in exposed areas than compared to the rest of the county, such as kidney cancer.

The State of Colorado and the EPA stopped investigating the scope of the contamination claiming they lacked funding.

The State of Colorado, unlike other states, has also refused to offer PFAS blood level tests to exposed residents and their children, medical monitoring or set legally enforceable PFAS limits in drinking water.

The Air Force has claimed legal sovereign immunity when the State tried to place legally enforced limits on their contaminated ground water at Peterson Air Force Base.

After a panel of independent scientists tested the blood of more than 65,000 Ohio Valley residents, US courts recognized a link between PFAS contaminated drinking water and kidney cancer. Subsequently 5 of my family members residing in the contaminated areas have been diagnosed with and/or died from kidney cancer. And nearly half of these family members dead of kidney cancer, are married into the family, and do not share any DNA with each other. So, this deadly effect cannot be explained by genetics. And we have a 15-year-old cousin who required a kidney transplant in 2018- after both of his kidneys suddenly failed; and his doctors ruled out genetics as a cause of his kidney failure.

For example, our cousin, Master Sergeant Retired Shelton Lee King, a decorated Vietnam war veteran and U.S. Army retiree, lived in a PFAS drinking water contaminated community from 1975 until his death in 2012 from kidney cancer. But per Colorado law, his children had until 2014 to seek legal justice for the deadly contamination of his tap water, however the Air Force did not make the public aware of this contamination until 2016-17. Further, Shelton's wife Ann, my mother's 1st cousin, would die of cancer in that same house in 2018.

Here is a quote from our cousin Shelton's obituary:

"His awards included the Meritorious Service medal, the Army Commendation Medal, the Vietnam Service Medal with one Bronze Service Star, the Vietnam Campaign Medal with "60" Device, and the Vietnam Cross of Gallantry with Palm."

However, we are denied any avenue of justice for Shelton because of Colorado's strict two-year statute of limitations, along with the fact that we were unaware of this contamination for decades. Military families are denied any legal recourse for those who died from PFAS-linked cancer or diseases in 2014 or prior; more than 2 years prior to official public acknowledgement in 2017 by the Defense Department.

Another American patriot in our family to die of kidney cancer was my maternal first cousin Princess Patterson, who died at the young age of 54. My father also died of kidney cancer in 2017. None of these three were blood related to each other, yet they died of kidney while living at least the past decade in one of our PFAS contaminated neighborhoods.

Yet, another 1st cousin who lived in Fountain, who's drinking water was contaminated with unsafe levels of PFAS, while stationed at Fort Carson starting in the 1990s through the present. But while he and his family unknowingly had their tap water contaminated with PFAS, he served 2 combat tours in Iraq, while his wife and 2 children resided in Fountain.

Background:

In 2016, the E.P.A found that Fountain, Security, Widefield, and Stratmoor water districts in southern Colorado Springs had drinking water all had levels of toxic PFAS chemicals linked to cancer and disease exceeding the E.P.A's new "safe" level of 70 ppt, which the CDC says is still

10 times too high to protect our health. Fountain's drinking water was twice the new E.P.A recommended level, Widefield's more than three times higher, while Security's was nearly 20 times higher than the recommended level. Over 70,000 residents were told to immediately switch to drinking bottled water. A year later, Peterson AFB officials would release an investigative report finding aqueous firefighting foam (AFFF) use on the base contaminated the widefield aquifer; the primary drinking water source for Widefield, Security, Stramoor, and Fountain.

Peterson Air Force Base is located south of Colorado Springs, Colorado and was one of the ten of U.S. military bases that the Defense Department found exceeding high levels of PFAS contaminated water. In 2018, the Defense Department also reported to the House Armed Service Committee last year that in addition to the public water wells surrounding Peterson AFB, 39 private drinking water wells also tested above 70 ppt with the highest drinking water level found being 7,910 ppt, more than 100 times higher. On Peterson AFB, PFAS levels in the groundwater were found as high as 88,000 ppt.

I was born and raised in Colorado Springs, Colorado into a big loving and close-knit family in which both my mother's and father's side had resided there since before World War II. Most of my family still resides in Colorado. Having moved to New York City 8 years ago I was unaware of the contamination until I visited my mother in January 2018 and CBS This Morning televised a segment on the contamination and my mother pointed out to me that that area was where my grandparents and father had moved to, and still owned the house at that time.

After that I started doing lots of research on the issues, I found and reached out to a community of affected residents around Colorado Springs called the Fountain Valley Clean water coalition and started working with its members and its Co-founder Liz Rosenbaum to advocate for justice around this contamination issue.

I then started reaching out to all my family members who still lived in the Fountain Valley area, where the contamination occurred and that's when I learned that family members who had lived in the area for decades and had died from kidney cancer had been excluded from joining the local class action suite, like our cousins Vietnam decorated war hero, Shelton King and Princess Patterson; because they died 2 years prior to 2016 when the Air Force publicly first acknowledged and made the public aware of the water contamination.

During this last year researching, advocating and working with the Fountain Valley Clean Water Coalition and the national PFAS Contamination Coalition I would learn the following disturbing facts about inadequate state and federal response:

In 1991, at the request of the U.S. Army Corp banned and replaced PFAS declaring it hazardous at Fort Carson, a US Army base also located in the same town of Colorado Springs, while Peterson Air Force Base admitted dumping PFAS into the drinking water source for decades only stopped in 2015.

University of Colorado researchers recently found extremely high levels of PFAS in the blood of Widefield, Security, & Fountain residents with one PFAS chemical found at 14 times higher than the national average, also making it the highest average found in the country. The Air Force admitted to dumping toxic PFAS for decades into the water which then showed itself in blood tests of residents, which led to residents contracting cancer or dead from cancer. Based on their own research beginning in 1979, the Air Force knew the health dangers of PFAS, yet they ignored their own warnings and continued dumping toxic PFAS into our drinking water source of Fountain Creek until 2015.

Even more concerning, the Air Force actually admitted dumping thousands of gallons of toxic PFAS chemicals into our water source at least several times per year for decades as reported by the Colorado Springs Gazette. So, this wasn't accidental leaching of these toxic chemicals.

Both the Defense Department and the EPA knew for decades that these toxic PFAS chemicals were harmful to people, yet Peterson AFB was slowed to continue dumping toxic chemicals into our drinking water source. In fact, the U.S. Army banned and replaced PFAS-laced AFFF in 1991, replacing it with a non-hazardous alternative. Despite both finding significantly higher cancer rates in our PFAS contaminated neighborhoods.

Despite having a budget surplus in 2018 of over \$1.1 billion, the state of Colorado still has not conducted a formal investigation on the scope of the PFAS contamination, conducted PFAS blood level tests of our affected children, nor passed legally enforceable MCLs of PFAS in drinking water.

Our Family Members Permanently Separated From Us By Government PFAS Dumping

"I believe this is a true national emergency," Cummings said. "When our own government rips children from the arms of their mothers and fathers with no plans to reunite them – that is government-sponsored child abuse." – Rep. Elijah Cummings

Via the Air Force on Peterson Air Force Base (CO), government admitted knowingly dumping toxic PFAS chemicals linked to cancer into their drinking water, ignoring warnings of the health dangers from their own scientists, thus here are our family members living in contaminated areas for at least 10 years & thus were permanently separated from us by these government actions:

- Nicole Hood (cousin), died in 2018 of breast cancer at age 38, separated from 2 daughters and a husband (Widefield water district).
- Princess Patterson (cousin), died in 2013 of kidney cancer at age 54, separated from 1 son & grandchildren (Stratmoor water district).
- Arletha Bragg (paternal grandmother), died in 1991 of breast cancer age 68, separated from 2 children & many grandchildren (Widefield water district).

- Jesse Bragg (paternal grandfather), died of cancer age 75, separated from 2 children & many grandchildren (Widefield water district).
- Jesse F. Bragg (father), died in 2017 of kidney cancer, age 69, separated from 2 children & 3 grandchildren (Widefield water district).
- Donald Patterson (maternal uncle by marriage), military vet died of cancer age 72, separated from 6 children and numerous grandchildren (Stratmoor water district).
- Genevieve Armstead (maternal great-aunt), military spouse died in 2017 of cancer age 70, separated from 3 children and numerous grandchildren (Security water district).
- Master Sergeant Retired Shelton L. King (maternal cousin by marriage), military vet died in 2012 of kidney cancer age 77, separated from 2 sons and numerous grandchildren (Security water district).
- Ann King (maternal cousin), military spouse died in 2018 of cancer, age 75, separated from 2 sons and numerous grandchildren (Stratmoor water district).
- Charles Mitchell (maternal uncle by marriage), military vet died of cancer at age 70, separated from 4 children and numerous grandchildren (Stratmoor water district).