

Expansive PFAS protections take effect in 2026, as states lead on chemical safety

At least 33 states will likely consider more than 275 policies addressing toxic chemicals and plastics this year

PORTLAND, OR, UNITED STATES,
February 18, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/

-- Today, Safer States released its [2026](#)

[Analysis of State Policy Addressing Toxic Chemicals and Plastics](#), finding

that a major wave of state health protections is moving from adoption to implementation this year. In 2026, at least 15 major state laws and regulations are taking effect, providing new public health protections to more than 62 million people. At the same time, 33 states are expected to consider at least 275 policies addressing toxic chemicals and plastics. Together, these actions

reflect a growing shift toward health-first, prevention-based policy; and demonstrate how state leadership is reshaping national markets.

“

The protections taking effect this year show what strong, health-centered leadership can achieve and why state action is as important as ever.”

Sarah Doll, national director of Safer States

“State policymakers are responding to what communities already know and what they need. Toxic chemicals and plastics are contaminating our lives without our consent,” said Sarah Doll, national director of Safer States. “The good news is that this harm is preventable. The protections taking effect this year show what strong, health-centered leadership can achieve and why state action is as

important as ever.”

Health-First Policies Move from Adoption to Impact

The 15 policies taking effect in 2026 include broad restrictions on PFAS “forever chemicals” in consumer products, first-in-the-nation bans on entire chemical classes including bisphenols, stronger disclosure requirements for PFAS in products, and new limits on toxic chemicals in cosmetics, textiles, furniture, and children’s products.

Many of these laws regulate chemical classes rather than addressing one chemical at a time. As



An Alliance for a
Healthier World

they move into implementation, they are already driving supply chain changes and product reformulation well beyond state borders.

“Firefighters are routinely exposed to PFAS and other toxic chemicals found in firefighting foam, protective gear, and the materials that burn during fires,” said Jeanine Nicholson, former fire chief at San Francisco Fire Department. “These exposures are linked to serious health harms, including cancer. When states act to put these protections in place, phase out these chemicals, and prevent exposure in the first place, they are putting health first. That kind of leadership protects firefighters, our families, and the communities we serve.”

Federal Chemical Protections Under Threat as States Step Up

The analysis also comes as Congress considers chemical industry-backed proposals that would weaken the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) by limiting EPA’s authority to restrict harmful chemicals, short-cutting safety reviews for new chemicals, and rolling back safeguards designed to prevent harm before it occurs.

Nearly 350 state legislators from across the country have signed letters urging Congress not to reopen or weaken TSCA or strip states of their authority.

“While Congress considers weakening federal protections under TSCA, Rhode Island is stepping up because families shouldn’t have to find out after the fact that harmful chemicals were allowed into their food, water, or products,” said Rhode Island State Representative June Speakman. “These policies put health first and give businesses clear rules for moving toward safer alternatives.”

The analysis also highlights a set of Essential Elements that define strong policy action: transparency, banning the bad, safer solutions, and polluter accountability.

PFAS Policies Lead 2026 Implementation

PFAS “forever chemicals” remain a central focus of state action. The analysis finds that nine of the 15 major policies taking effect directly target PFAS, and 31 states are likely to consider additional PFAS legislation in 2026.

States are advancing policies that phase out PFAS in products, disclose requirements, protect firefighters and other highly exposed workers, regulate contaminated sludge, and provide cleanup funding.

Beyond PFAS: Class-Based Chemical Reform

The analysis finds that states are increasingly applying the lessons learned from PFAS to other toxic chemical classes, including bisphenols and phthalates, moving toward broader, system-

level prevention.

In 2026, multiple states are implementing bans on entire chemical classes in products such as children's feeding products, receipts, cosmetics and personal care products, furniture and textiles, cookware, and menstrual products.

States are also increasingly treating plastics as a public health issue, advancing policies to reduce toxic chemical additives, microplastics, highly toxic plastics, and unnecessary plastic use, especially in products people eat from, touch, wear, and use daily.

State action is occurring alongside growing retailer efforts to reduce toxic chemicals and plastics from products and packaging.

"Within the US, companies usually do not create state-specific products. When state standards change, national supply chains often change too," said Cheri Peele, director of government and market policy at Toxic-Free Future. "By setting clear, health-based standards on PFAS, bisphenols, and other toxic chemicals, states are driving safer products nationwide, not just within their state borders."

[Press release: https://www.saferstates.org/press-room/expansive-pfas-protections-take-effect-in-2026-as-states-lead-on-chemical-safety/](https://www.saferstates.org/press-room/expansive-pfas-protections-take-effect-in-2026-as-states-lead-on-chemical-safety/)

SAFER STATES

Safer States is a national alliance of environmental health organizations and coalitions from across the nation working to safeguard people and the planet from toxic chemicals, and to ensure availability of safer solutions for a healthier world. Led by state-based organizations, the alliance seeks government and corporate action that lead to safer chemicals and materials, and protection of public health and communities by transitioning away from harmful chemicals and holding chemical polluters accountable. saferstates.org

Stephanie Stohler

Safer States

[email us here](#)

Visit us on social media:

[Facebook](#)

[X](#)

This press release can be viewed online at: <https://www.einpresswire.com/article/893531933>

EIN Presswire's priority is source transparency. We do not allow opaque clients, and our editors try to be careful about weeding out false and misleading content. As a user, if you see something we have missed, please do bring it to our attention. Your help is welcome. EIN Presswire, Everyone's Internet News Presswire™, tries to define some of the boundaries that are reasonable

in today's world. Please see our Editorial Guidelines for more information.

© 1995-2026 Newsmatics Inc. All Right Reserved.