

## **Statement to Congressional Committee Staff Nov. 22, 2019**

My name is Mark Cuker and I live in Montgomery County PA, about a 10 minute drive from the Willow Grove NAS. For over thirty years I have worked as an environmental lawyer representing people exposed to toxic chemicals in drinking water. My best known case—the Toms River Childhood Cancer Cluster, was the subject of a Pulitzer Prize winning book

In the summer of 2016, I learned that my own drinking water was contaminated with PFAS coming from the Willow Grove base. Since then I have been active in my community fighting PFAS pollution, as well as representing victims of this pollution.

Not a week goes by without a phone call from someone who lived in Horsham, Warminster or Warrington Township, drank polluted water for years and has now been diagnosed with an unusual form of cancer. It might be a common cancer like prostate cancer at an early age or a rare cancer like cancer of the urethra at any age. I discuss the current state of the medical science—the diseases which have been probably linked to PFAS and the many more for which a causal relationship is still unknown. But the one positive thing I can tell people is that, at least NOW, due to the proactive and thoughtful work of Horsham, Warminster and Warrington townships, the water is safe to drink.

Now even that has been called into question. As pregnant women and infant children drink huge volumes of water, EPA is abdicating its role as protector of our most precious, life sustaining resource. In law and in life, there is nothing more important than human health.

We urge you to keep EPA's feet to the fire and true to its mission as the Environmental PROTECTION Agency.

I would like to add something about the astonishing lack of action by the DOD towards adjacent landowners whose land has been badly polluted by PFAS. One of my clients has two toxic streams of PFAS coming from the base and traversing his property. I called this to the attention of the DOD over THREE YEARS AGO. When they refused to do anything about the problem, we filed a lawsuit. They are still refusing to address this, and we are now scheduled for trial.

In my 30 plus experience of representing victims of pollution, I have represented many landowners whose property was polluted by corporate wrongdoers. I have NEVER SEEN any solvent corporation refuse to take action to address ongoing pollution on an adjacent property. ANY corporate polluter would have addressed and resolved this matter years ago. You would expect the DOD—charged with a mission of protecting the public—to act more responsibly than a for profit company. But in fact they have been much worse, fighting us at every turn, invoking every technicality, using delay, delay, delay at every step.

The DOD owes its neighbors at least as much as any good corporate citizen. In fact, it has abused its protected status as a sovereign entity to put its head in the sand, deny the undeniable, and find every possible excuse not to do what needs to be done. We deserve better.