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**To:** Coriell, Scott  
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**For Immediate Release**

June 1, 2016

**Gov. Shumlin Signs Bill to Protect Vermonters from Toxic Chemicals**

**North Bennington** – Just over three months after the discovery of elevated levels of the potentially harmful chemical PFOA in private wells in and around North Bennington and Bennington, Gov. Peter Shumlin today signed a law that will hold polluters responsible and help better control the use of potentially toxic chemicals in the state.

"The discovery of elevated levels of PFOA in Bennington and North Bennington is an unfortunate wake-up call exposing vulnerabilities in the decades-old federal system of regulating chemicals of concern," Gov. Shumlin said. "The federal government needs to act, but Vermont won't wait for it to do so. This new law will make it easier for the state to classify and identify toxic chemical use and to give the state more power to hold polluters responsible. This bill is a big step in the right direction."

Specifically, the new law, H.595, establishes a working group on toxic chemicals that will be formed by July 1, 2016. The working group will submit a report to the legislature by January 15, 2017, with recommendations on how to reduce exposure and increase awareness of toxic chemicals in the environment. The Agency of Natural Resources will also convene stakeholders to draft rules related to natural resource damages. The agency will submit draft rules to the legislature by February 1, 2017 and adopt final rules by March 1, 2018.

The new law will also permit the Agency of Natural Resources to solicit information from companies who may have used hazardous materials and to assess damages to liable parties. This will allow the agency to prevent future incidents and to immediately identify the source of exposure.

All of these changes will give the state the ability to take timely action to protect Vermonters from exposure to harmful chemicals and ensure transparency of the chemicals that are used.

Also today, the Governor updated on the State's response efforts to PFOA contamination in Bennington and North Bennington. The State is reviewing engineering studies that would extend municipal drinking water lines, which are not contaminated with PFOA, to homes and businesses in the areas. The initial costs of extending the lines in Bennington and North Bennington are \$13.7 million and \$3.2 million, respectively. The State is in discussions with Saint Gobain about payment for those municipal line expansions.

"Now that we have received these studies we will work with the towns and others to determine a schedule that gets affected residents hooked up to the municipal lines as quickly as possible. This has been and will continue to be a top priority of my Administration."

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