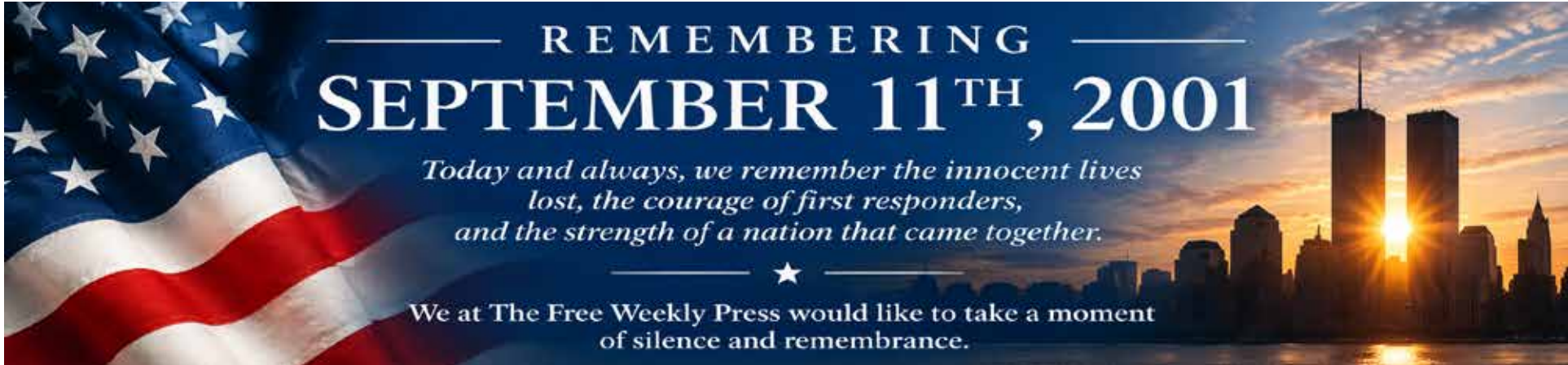




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Bangor Wins 3 to 1 Over Pen Argyl In Field Hockey



Bangor went head to head with their Slate Belt Rivals, Pen Argyl, in field hockey on September 4th. Bangor won 3 to 1. Photo by Dale Young/The Free Weekly Press

Pen Argyl Takes on Notre Dame Green Pond in Girls Soccer



Pen Argyl took on Notre Dame Green Pond in Girls Soccer on September 5th. Pen Argyl was defeated 7-0. Photo by Dale Young/The Free Weekly Press

Pen Argyl Lookout Fire Co Holds 87th Annual Labor Day Parade



Pen Argyl Lookout Fire Company held their 87th Annual Labor Day Parade on September 7th. Photo by Dale Young/The Free Weekly Press

Bangor Goes Head to Head Against Pocono Mountain East During Their Football Game Honoring First Responders



Bangor took on Pocono Mountain East on Septembet 3rd in their Football game honoring First Responders. Bangor was defeated 7 to 34. Photo by Dale Young/The Free Weekly Press

Northampton County to Hold Press Conference on September 8 to Raise Awareness During Suicide Prevention Month

Join Northampton County Executive Tara Zrinski, Aevium Clubs from local high schools, the Northampton County Suicide Prevention Task Force, and families impacted by suicide loss for a press conference to raise awareness during Suicide Prevention Month.

Special guests include Jim Presto, who is a suicide loss survivor, part of the Northampton County LOSS Team (Local Outreach to Suicide Survivors), and a board member of Aevium and the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP).

During this press conference, Northampton County will highlight

its commitment to raising awareness, supporting suicide prevention efforts, and fostering hope for individuals and families impacted by suicide. Executive Zrinski will recognize the dedicated efforts of the LOSS (Local Outreach to Suicide Survivors) Team, which provides compassionate support to families and individuals coping with the immediate aftermath of suicide.

"Suicide impacts every community, and it is important that we come together to both prevent these tragedies and support the families who are left behind," Executive Zrinski says. "The LOSS Team's

work brings light during the darkest moments and provides critical resources to help survivors navigate grief."

Throughout September, Northampton County will continue working with community partners to increase awareness of suicide prevention resources, encourage open conversations about mental health, and remind residents that help is available.

If you or someone you know is struggling, help is available. Call or text 988, the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, to connect with trained counselors 24/7. Northampton County Crisis is also available 24/7 at 610-252-9060.

Congressman Kean Hosts Veterans Affairs Roundtable with Secretary Collins



Last week, Congressman Tom Kean, Jr. (NJ-07) hosted a Veteran Services and Advocacy Roundtable with U.S. Secretary of Veterans Affairs Doug Collins.

The roundtable brought together federal, state, and local leaders, Veterans Service Organizations, veteran-serving nonprofits, and other veterans from New Jersey's 7th Congressional District. Participants discussed the priorities and challenges facing veterans and their families, while working to identify solutions and strengthen the support available to those who have served.

"It is my priority to ensure that New Jersey's veterans receive the care, benefits, and support they have earned," said Congressman Kean. "I appreciate Secretary Collins coming to New Jersey and hearing directly from the veterans and organizations serving our communities. From the Lyons VA to local veterans' organizations across our district, I am focused on identifying what is working, fixing what is not, and strengthening the ser-

vices veterans rely on. I will continue working to cut through obstacles and make sure the men and women who served our country can access the care and support they deserve."

"Under President Trump and thanks to the steadfast support of strong leaders like Rep. Kean, VA is making major improvements for Veterans in New Jersey and across the nation," said VA Secretary Doug Collins. "We look forward to continuing to work with Rep. Kean to make VA benefits better, faster and easier to use than ever before."

"The Veterans of Foreign Wars thanks Congressman Kean and Secretary Collins for their leadership and cooperation with veteran advocates to improve the lives and welfare of New Jersey's veterans," said Ken Hagemann, VFW State Commander, Department of New Jersey.

"It was a true privilege to sit at this table. I was honored to contribute to this vital conversation with our leadership, focusing on how we can better support our veterans, their needs and

valuable community presence," said Jacquie Petersen, Warren County VSO. "Participants were given time to discuss our concerns. Topics ranged from VA Healthcare, Transportation, VA Claims and the concerns for our veterans as they transition back to civilian life."

"Congressman Kean's Veterans Advocacy Roundtable was truly a brilliant way to gather Veterans Advocates from various backgrounds to share their insights and suggestions, resulting in a highly productive meeting," said Stacia McDonough, founder of Independence for Veterans. "It's clear that the Congressman and his dedicated team are committed to making meaningful improvements in the Veterans' services. As someone from a family extraordinarily rich in military history, it brings me great joy to witness progress being made for their benefit. Words alone cannot fully convey my gratitude for his outstanding efforts."

For more information on recent VA improvements visit: department.va.gov/veteransfirst.

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WMI Study Outlines Opportunities to Strengthen PGC and PFBC

Wildlife Management Institute (WMI) has completed its research study of the Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC) and the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC). WMI, a third-party, non-profit organization, conducted this study to evaluate opportunities to improve the long-term sustainability of both commissions.

Through this broad look at both agencies, WMI has made several recommendations that both the PGC and PFBC will take into consideration, specifically as to how those recommendations could directly impact the hunters and anglers of the Commonwealth. As noted in the report, more granular evaluation is needed before any implementation takes place.

Some notable take-aways:

- The study does not mention a recommendation for merging the PGC and PFBC into one agency.
- There are recommendations to consolidate services across some administrative areas to increase efficiency (pg. 68).
- The study recommends the unification of the PGC Bureau of Wildlife Protection and the PFBC Bureau of Law Enforcement. This unified force would be under the purview of the PGC. (pgs. 59, 69).



fices (pg. 69).

The full study can be found online at: www.pa.gov/content/dam/copapwp-pagov/en/pgc/documents/about-us/mediareportssurveys/pa-report_final_083126.pdf

From PGC Executive Director Steve Smith:

“The Pennsylvania Game Commission takes its fiscal responsibility seriously, and that includes being good stewards of every dollar entrusted to us. In part, that is why we chose to do this study now, when the Commission is in solid financial standing. Our focus will always be on making thoughtful decisions and investments that will protect the interests of Pennsylvania hunters.

It is of the utmost importance to note that the recommendations within this study do not reflect any imminent or immediate action from the Game Commission.

This robust report warrants meticulous review and in-depth communication with our constituents, our board of commissioners, legislators, stakeholders and the Fish and Boat Commission.

We appreciate the extensive amount of effort that WMI put into this study to locate potential areas of improvement that could ultimately benefit the Game Commission, the Fish and Boat Commission and Pennsylvania’s hunters, anglers and wildlife resources.”

New to the Bangor Public Library

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Adult Fiction: *Not a Word: A Novel* by Linwood Barclay; *Above the Bay of Angels: A Novel* by Rhys Bowen; *Promise Me Never: A Novel* by Liv Constantine; *Lifted by the Wings of Destiny: January-June 1874* by Ginny Dye; *The Knave and the Moon* by Rachel Gillig; *Never Whistle at Night: An Indigenous Dark Fiction Anthology*; *Back for Blood: Never Whistle at Night, Part II; That Night: A Novel* by Gillian McAllister; *The Intrigue* by Silvia Moreno-Garcia; *The Most Dangerous Games* by MrBeast; *The Birthing Tree* by Amanda Peters; *The Parisian Heist: A Novel* by Jo Piazza; *Just for the Plot* by Meghan Quinn; *Kissed by the Gods* by Caty Rogan; *Caught Up* by Liz Tomforde; *Play Along* by Liz Tomforde; *The Right Move* by Liz Tomforde; *Mile High* by Liz Tomforde; *Rewind it Back* by Liz Tomforde

Adult Non Fiction:

Hope by Lisa Gail Davis; *The Korean Myths: A Guide to the Gods, Heroes and Legends* by Heinz Insu Fenkl; *Hidden Haunts: A Creepy Collection of Forgotten Ghostly Places* by Conner Gossel; *The Kennedys and the Windsors: The Story of Two Dynasties, One Born, One Made* by Caroline Hallemann; *The Kirby Collection of Historical Paintings, Located at Lafayette College, Easton, Pennsylvania* by Lafayette College, Easton, Pa.; *Dedication: Bee Hive Youth Center*

Large Print Adult Fiction:

The Melody of Love by Wanda E. Brunstetter; *Delusional* by James Patterson; *This Changes Everything* by Lisa Scottoline; *The Author's Guide to Murder: A Novel* by Beatriz Williams

Easy Fiction:

Penelope Rex vs. the New Kid by Ryan T. Higgins; *Penguin Pete, Ahoy!* By Marcus Pfister; *Little Blue Truck Lost and Found* by Alice Schertle

Easy Non Fiction:

Butt or Face?: Rainbow Butts by Kari Lavelle

Junior Fiction:

Island of Skulls by Peter Burns; *Fight of the Flamestrike* by Cressida Cowell; *Kiki and the New Magic* by Eiko Kadono; *The Neverfear* by Katherine Rundell

Junior Non Fiction:

LEGO DC Comics Super Heroes: The Awesome Guide by Cavan Scott; *Atlas of Spooky Places: A Spine-Tingling Tour of Mummies, Monsters, Mysteries, and More* by Paige Towler

Young Adult Fiction:

Barbie Dreamscape by Alex Aster; *All Better Now* by Neal Shusterman

DVDs:

Disclosure Day; *Star Wars: The Mandalorian and Grogu*

New to the Blue Mountain Community Library

Blue Mountain Community Library News:
The library is located at 216 S. Robinson Ave. in Pen Argyl. Open hours are Monday-Saturday 10am-12pm and Monday and Thursday 6-8pm. Questions? Call 610-863-3029 or email info@bmcl.org.

Our new stairlift has been installed, thanks to grant funding from both the Green Knight Economic Development Corporation and Libraries Transforming Communities: Accessible Small and Rural Communities via the American Library Association. It will be inspected and ready for use soon.
Stop by to see our beautiful new siding, lighting, and lettering on our building, via Wagner's Wood Specialties, thanks to a generous grant from the Green Knight Economic Development Corporation.

Get your ticket now for a special luncheon with author Lee Upton on Thurs., Oct. 8 at 12pm at Grace United Methodist Church, 404 E. Mountain Ave., Pen Argyl. Tickets are \$15 and available at the library through Sept. 26. Cash or check. Visit www.leeupton.com and check out one of her books!

Fall Preschool Storytime will meet the first and third Wednesdays of each month at 10:30am: Sept. 2 and 16, Oct. 7 and 21, Nov. 4 and 18, and Dec. 2 and 16. Participants are required to register for each storytime they plan to attend; send child's name, birthdate, parent/guardian's name, and phone number to info@bmcl.org, or provide this info at the library or via 610-863-3029. Deadline is Monday two days prior to each storytime. Spots are limited.

Our Readers' Raffle will continue through September! Every time you use your library card, get a chance to win a \$25 gift certificate to Zanette's Nazareth Grill!

The adult book discussion group next meets on Tues., Sept. 8 at 6:30pm to discuss "The Berry Pickers" by Amanda Peters. Email info@bmcl.org to RSVP.

Thanks to donors, we have new wooden puzzles and a cute new table and chairs in the children's room! Come check them out - and try our school-themed scavenger hunt for September.

New to the circulating collection:

Adult fiction:

The Unicorn Hunters (Katherine Arden); Seek the Traitor's Son (Veronica Roth); Project Hail Mary (Andy Weir); Want to Know a Secret? (Freida McFadden); The Intruder (Freida McFadden)

Large print:

Ghost to the Rescue (Carolyn Hart); An Island Wedding (Jenny Colgan); Jacqueline in Paris (Ann Mah)

YA fiction:

Amethyst: Princess of Gemworld (Shannon Hale and Dean Hale); The Okay Witch (Emma Steinkellner); Table Titans Club (Scott Kurtz); Crown of Midnight (Sarah J. Maas); Frank Herbert's Dune [graphic novel] (Brian Herbert and Kevin J. Anderson); George Washington (Jeffrey Finegan)

YA nonfiction:

Lafayette! [graphic novel] (Nathan Hale); Total Olympics (Jeremy Fuchs); The King of Sting (Coyote Peterson)

Juvenile fiction:

Poppleton (Cynthia Rylant); Call of the Sound Dragon (Tracey West); Amy the Amethyst Fairy (Daisy Meadows); Prism's Paint (Emily Bliss); Vacation Dreams (Sue Bentley); Dory and the Real True Friend (Abby Hanlon); Intergalactic Gas (Aaron Blabey); Peanut Butter and Jelly (Ben Clanton); Narwhal's Otter Friend (Ben Clanton); InvestiGATORS Heist and Seek (John Patrick Green); The Seals on the Bus (Lenny Hort); This Book Is Perfect! (Ron Keres); Pete the Cat and the New Guy (Kimberly and James Dean); The World Needs More Purple People (Kristen Bell and Benjamin Hart); 5-Minute Pinkalicious Stories (Victoria Kann); Trollbella Throws a Party (Chris Colfer)

Juvenile nonfiction:

Who Would Win? (Jerry Pallotta); Lions (Amy Sky Koster); Weird Sea Creatures (Laura Marsh); What Was the Gold Rush? (Joan Holub); What Was the Titanic? (Stephanie Sabol); What Was Woodstock? (Joan Holub); The Everything Kids' Science Experiments Book (Tom Robinson); Explorers: Triumphs and Troubles (Paul Mason); 100,000 Whys (Ryan Hale); The Marvelous Thing That Came from a Spring (Gilbert Ford)

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Garden Dilemmas? Ask Mary!



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Hello, fellow readers,
After an unsettling morning yesterday, I decided to soothe my soul with a walk in the woods. Jolee and I headed to the Paulinskill Valley Trail, parking at the lot by Footbridge Park to walk our often-traveled three-mile route to Blairstown Airport and back.

But barricades greeted us with signs from the park service: “Area Closed.” I considered investigating but honored the announcement. So, leaving the truck parked, we walked beyond Footbridge Park to the trail entrance in the opposite direction.

So you could say I didn’t choose another route; I was guided there, which brought treasures and reflections that helped my heart.

I always enjoy the life of the woods and the beautiful combinations of plants Mother Nature puts into place, drawing my attention away from the noise in my head and toward the beauty around me.

White wood asters (*Eurybia divaricata*) are beginning their late-summer show, their small white flowers hovering above dark green foliage and mingling with colonies of Christmas fern (*Polystichum acrostichoides*) and lady fern (*Athyrium filix-femina*). Yes, there was Japanese stilt grass here and there among them, and I felt the urge to weed it out. But had I started, I might still be there.

Have you noticed how many woodland wildflowers bloom

white? Their flowers are especially luminous in the subdued light beneath the tree canopy, where they lure a host of late-season pollinators.

Jolee remembered the trail even though we hadn’t traveled this direction together in a long while. She knew the paths leading down to the Paulins Kill and headed toward the water for a dip. But I kept her on her retractable leash rather than allowing her usual explorations, mostly in pursuit of chipmunks. She didn’t seem to mind.

On the return trip, we made our way down a rocky slope to a small pool someone had fashioned with stones in a nook along the water’s edge. The water was fresh and clear, and Jolee happily stepped in. I considered dipping my feet too, but the day wasn’t quite warm enough.

Back on the trail, the old railroad cinders turned Jolee’s wet pads black—a trace of another time next to the wildflowers and ferns of today.

The Paulinskill Valley Trail follows the former New York, Susquehanna & Western Railway, which once carried passengers, coal, produce, and dairy products through the valley. Pieces of its history linger beneath our feet and alongside the trail.

I came upon one of them—an old concrete milepost marked “JC 81,” signifying 81 miles to Jersey City, the railroad’s eastern terminus. But in that moment, I saw something else. JC brought Jesus Christ to mind, and the 8, turned sideways, became the symbol for infinity. The One stood alone beside it.

I smiled. Sometimes we see what we need to see. My heart lifted.

As we walked along the trail, the landscape from the past was revealing its future. The nearly 130-year-old Paulina Dam, near East Crisman Road, was removed in 2024. For



generations, the dam held back the Paulins Kill, creating a broad, lake-like expanse of water. I remember walking this trail when houses sat high above that wide stretch of river, and turtles sunned themselves on logs and rocks below.

Now the water is nar-

row again, and the Paulins Kill has returned to its free-flowing state.

Below one house, a paddle boat rested off to the side—a relic of the water that used to be there. Nearby, protective tubes surrounded newly planted trees—small signs of a landscape beginning again.

For a moment, it felt almost ghostlike. I wondered where the turtles sun themselves now and thought of the people in those houses and how dramatically their familiar view had changed.

Yet, beneath that sense of loss, I could feel the breath of a river

returned to its natural state, finding its way again.

And as Jolee and I continued along the trail, I thought, perhaps I am finding my way too.

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Pen Argyl Lookout Fire Co 87th Annual Labor Day Parade



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Shapiro Administration Secures \$15 Million Settlement from Shell, Including \$7.5 Million to Resolve Air Quality Violations in PA

The Shapiro Administration announced that the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) entered into a consent order and agreement (opens in a new tab) (COA) with Shell Chemicals Appalachia, LLC (Shell), in which Shell formally acknowledged that the company exceeded total emission limitations for air contaminants and violated other environmental requirements, agreed to make improvements to reduce future exceedances, and agreed to pay \$15 million to DEP and the local Beaver County community. The COA resolves air quality violations at Shell's petrochemical facility in Potter and Center townships, Beaver County, from 2023 through August 2026. Under the agreement (opens in a

new tab), Shell will pay a \$7.5 million civil penalty, with 25 percent of that penalty directed to the Potter Township, the host municipality, as required by law. Shell will also contribute an additional \$7.5 million to establish the new Beaver County Environment and Community Fund, bringing the total direct investment in the local community to \$9.375 million. The Beaver County Environment and Community Fund will support projects that benefit the environment, health, natural resources, public safety, and small businesses in Beaver County. The fund will begin with \$1 million available for grants, while the remaining \$6.5 million will be established as an endowment to create a lasting source of grant funding for the community.

"DEP is continuing to hold Shell accountable for air quality violations and continuing to secure resources to improve the neighboring communities," said DEP Secretary Jessica Shirley. "This penalty and the new Beaver County Environment and Community Fund will help improve the surrounding communities and reduce the impact from the facility on the people that live there." Under the agreement, Shell is required to submit plans to improve the facility's elevated flare system and complete upgrades to its wastewater treatment plant. Shell also will continue submitting monthly emissions reports to DEP, which will be posted on DEP's website. The agreement resolves air quality violations occurring from

2023 through August 2026, including violations involving emissions from the facility and other environmental requirements. Shell also will be required to complete additional operational improvements under the agreement. The Shapiro Administration has consistently held Shell accountable for violations at the facility. In 2023, DEP secured a nearly \$10 million agreement (opens in a new tab) with Shell, including a \$4.9 million civil penalty and an additional \$5 million commitment for environmental projects benefiting the local community. Projects funded through that agreement included solar energy installations, museum exhibits, and local park upgrades. Pennsylvania's Environmental Rights Amendment guarantees Pennsylvanians the



right to clean air and pure water. Under Governor Josh Shapiro's leadership, his Administration will continue to enforce (opens in a new tab) the Commonwealth's environmental laws and regulations and hold companies accountable when they violate those requirements. For more information about the Shell Petrochemical Complex, visit Shell Chemical Appalachia, LLC Petrochemicals Complex | Department of Environmental Protection | Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

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Pen Argyl Lookout Fire Co 87th Annual Labor Day Celebration



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Pen Argyl Lookout Fire Co 87th Annual Labor Day Celebration Continued



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Photo by Dale Young/The Free Weekly Press

Veterans Assistance

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State Senator Rosemary Brown and the American Legion Department of Pennsylvania are partnering to offer assistance to veterans of the 40th Senatorial District in her Scotrun office.

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A Department Service Officer with the Pennsylvania American Legion will be on site to assist veterans with issues including:

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- ★ BURIAL AND SURVIVOR BENEFITS
- ★ STATE BENEFITS
- ★ OBTAINING MILITARY PERSONNEL & MEDICAL RECORDS

Contact Senator Brown's office at (570) 620-4326 to schedule an appointment.

Senator Rosemary M. Brown

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Visit SenatorBrown40.com for additional information.

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AG Davenport Renews Call for EPA Action on Microplastics

Attorney General Jennifer Davenport led a comment letter to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) once again urging it to include microplastics on its Unregulated Contaminant Monitoring Rule (UCMR) 6. The letter follows two prior multistate efforts — both led by New Jersey — requesting the inclusion of microplastics on this list of contaminants. The newly filed letter was joined by 12 other attorneys general.

“We are still learning the extent of the health risks posed to all of us by microplastics, and to respond appropriately we need more data,” said Attorney General Davenport. “Given that kids are particularly at risk from exposure to these tiny plastic fragments, it is especially important that the EPA require greater data collection and monitoring to inform further action to protect public health.”

“New Jersey urges the federal government to do the right thing by requiring national testing to better understand the impact pollution from microplastics is having on the safety of our drinking water,” New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Acting Commissioner Ed Potosnak said. “Pollution from microplastics is widespread in the environment — and our understanding of the potential public health consequences is rapidly expanding, especially for children. By conducting microplastics monitoring across the nation, we will be able to develop strategies and standards to protect the health of all Americans.”

Microplastics have



gained attention as a topic of public health concern in recent years, and New Jersey has led numerous efforts to prompt further study of these tiny, ubiquitous particles.

EPA is required to regularly publish two lists of unregulated contaminants pursuant to the Safe Drinking Water Act: the UCMR and the Contaminant Candidate List (CCL). The UCMR allows EPA to monitor the presence of 30 contaminants in public water systems by collecting data regarding their frequency and occurrence. The CCL identifies priority contaminants for further research and potential regulation, but does not require monitoring or data collection.

In November 2025, then-Governor Phil Murphy led a petition, signed by six other governors, asking EPA to add microplastics to the forthcoming draft of the UCMR 6. In June 2026, Attorney General Davenport led a comment letter, joined by 14 other attorneys general, applauding EPA’s inclusion of microplastics on the draft CCL 6, and calling for EPA to include microplastics on the forthcoming draft of the UCMR 6. The draft UCMR 6 was published on July 1, 2026, and did not include microplastics.

The letter asks EPA to reconsider its current proposal and include microplastics in the final version of the UCMR 6. The states call for strong federal action on this important issue to ensure that necessary frequency and occurrence information is collected, which will enable future research and regulatory efforts to adequately address the risks posed by microplastics to the environment and public health.

If microplastics are not added to the UCMR, our understanding of them will be stymied by the lack of consistent nationwide definitions, analytical methodologies, and requirements for monitoring and data collection.

Under the Safe Drinking Water Act, EPA must include a contaminant on the UCMR if requested by a petition of at least seven governors, unless EPA determines that doing so would prevent the listing of other contaminants of a higher public health concern. However, EPA did not determine that other contaminants present a higher public health concern when it published the UCMR 6 this summer without including microplastics.

Microplastics are tiny, often invisible particles less than 5 millimeters in diameter — even as tiny as 1 nanometer — composed of polymers and various chemical additives that were either originally part of a plastic product or were

adsorbed from the surrounding environment.

Research indicates microplastics are found throughout our environment including in our planet’s water, air, and land and because of the nature of the particles has the potential to affect human health. They have been found in all human organ systems, including the brain, and depending on their size and shape, can lead to cellular or tissue damage. In addition, microplastics can act as vectors for toxic chemicals to enter the human body, compounding exposure.

This matter was handled by Deputy Attorneys General Matthew Novak and Charlie Stegner-Freitag, under the supervision of Assistant Attorney General Jessica Palmer, within the Division of Law’s Environment and Clean Energy Practice Group.

Joining Attorney General Davenport in filing the comment letter are the attorneys general of Delaware, Illinois, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Wisconsin, Vermont, Virginia, and the District of Columbia.

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Kean Introduces Bipartisan Legislation to Expand Access to Veteran Mental Health Services

Last week, Congressman Tom Kean, Jr. (NJ-07) introduced legislation alongside Reps. Schrier (WA-08), Fitzpatrick (PA-01), Casten (IL-06), and Cohen (TN-09) that would expand access to Vet Center mental health counseling for veterans and their families across the country. The Veterans Centers-Enabled National Treatment Equitable Resource Supplement (CENTERS) for Mental Health Act of 2026 directs the VA to use census data and the VA’s statistical data to ensure every veteran has access to a Vet Center.

“Veterans sacrifice so much to keep our nation safe and deserve access to quality mental health care close to home,” said Congressman Kean. “Many veterans in New Jersey and across the country are faced with long, sometimes impossible travel to get the help they need. I worked across the aisle to find a solution. This bill, the Vet CENTERS for Mental Health Act, would increase access to mental health facilities and ensure our veterans receive access to the benefits they earned. “We have a clear responsibility to make sure that those who have served and protected our country receive the best service and care possible. Recent tragedies in Washington state and Veterans mental health crises across our country are stark reminders of why we need to address the Veteran mental health care gap,” said Congresswoman Schrier. “For rural communities in Washington state, Vet Centers are often hours away and understaffed. We need to do more to ensure Veterans have accessible care that works for them. This bill will en-



sure that Veterans and their families can easily access centers and mental health resources, improving the health of our entire communities and supporting those who have served our country.”

Background: Vet Centers provide a range of services to veterans and their families, including mental health counseling to combat veterans and those who suffered military sexual assault as well as bereavement services to families of servicemembers who die on duty. Vet Centers’ practice of providing services to families in addition to the affected veterans is also unique in the VA veteran care space.

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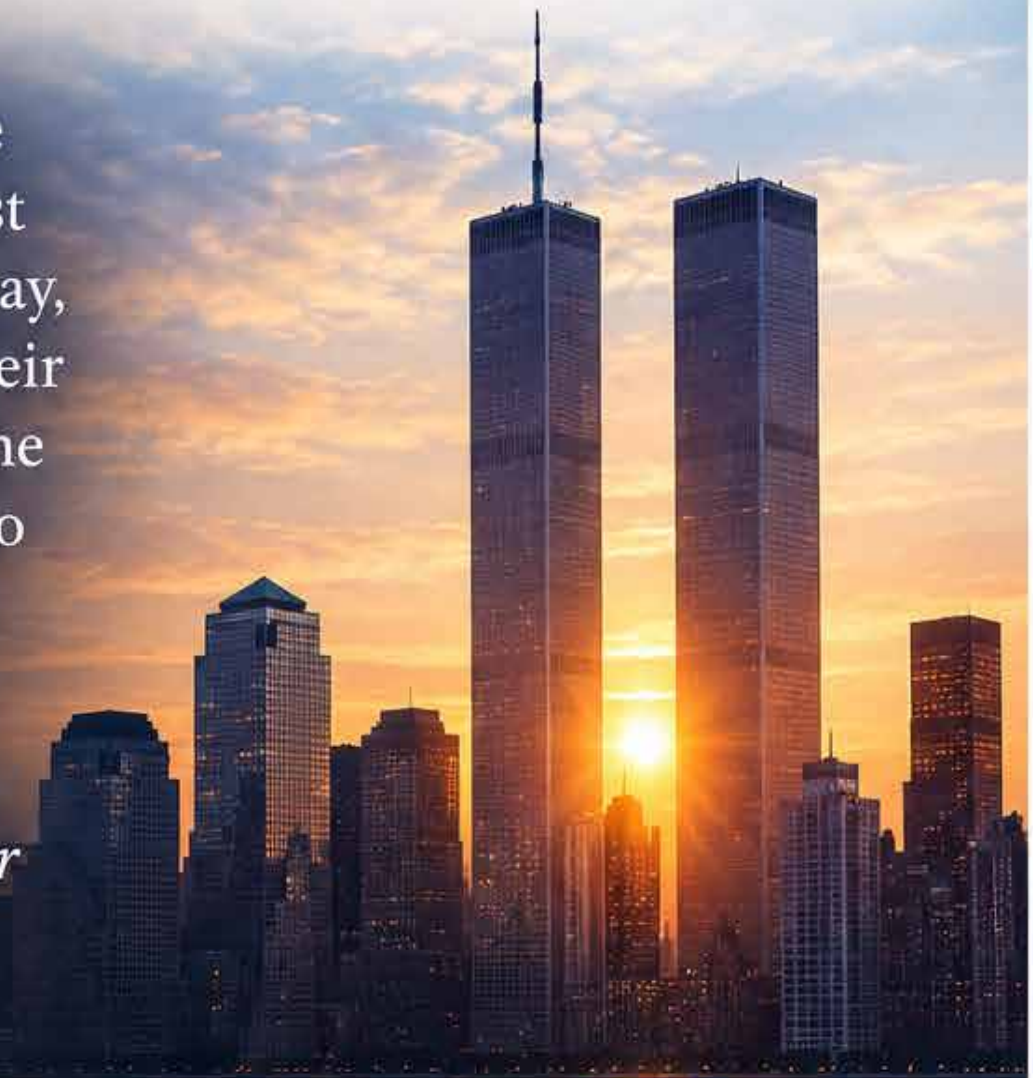
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