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Microplastics/U.S. Government Accountability Office: Congressional Request to Review U.S. EPA Efforts to Assess Presence/Risk

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24 Members of Congress and United States Senators have written the U.S. Government Accountability Office ("GAO") in a September 28th letter asking that it:

... conduct a comprehensive review of the Environmental Protection Agency's ("EPA") efforts to effectively assess the presence and risks associated with human exposure to micro- and nanoplastics.

The letter states that it is crucial for Congress to build upon and address gaps in the existing efforts to tackle this rapidly evolving issue by obtaining a clear account of EPA's:

- Completed and ongoing work.
- Current capabilities.
- Plans for future action.

Microplastics are generally defined as plastic debris less than 5mm in length.

Concerns have been expressed that they:

- Are ubiquitous in the environment.
- Can pose harm because of exposure to a wide range of species living in diverse habitats.
- Can be ingested by humans through drinking water, air, and food.
- Are regularly released into wastewater treatment plants as they are released from clothing from the wash cycle.

Nanoplastics are synthetic polymers with dimensions ranging from 1 nm to 1 um.

The Congressional letter expresses concern that knowledge about the risks associated with microplastics remains incomplete. It acknowledges that EPA has:

... begun to formulate plans to evaluate and address microplastic pollution, with work spanning across both the Biden and Trump Administrations.

The letter also:

- Addresses the role of the federal Safe Drinking Water Act.
- Indicates that Americans are aware of the danger that microplastics pose.
- States that Congress lacks a clear assessment of what the EPA has accomplished in its relevant work on microplastics and what work remains necessary.

The letter concludes by posing nine questions asking about relevant EPA activities and results.

A copy of letter can be found [here](#).