

**Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition * Michigan League of Conservation Voters
* Republicans for Environmental Protection**

Michigan Party Officials, Legislators Call On Presidential Candidates to Commit To Restoring Great Lakes

ANN ARBOR, MICH. (November 16)—Republican and Democratic Party officials in key counties in Michigan are calling on the 2008 presidential candidates to support Great Lakes restoration funding.

Their call comes on the same day that State Sen. Patty Birkholz (R-Saugatuck Township), chair of the Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs Committee, and State Rep. Rebekah Warren (D-Ann Arbor), chair of the Great Lakes and Environment Committee, are sending a bi-partisan letter to presidential candidates urging them to embrace Great Lakes restoration.

“The time to act for the protection and restoration of the Great Lakes is now, as we face an ever-increasing pressure from invasive species, pollution, and coastal habitat loss,” said Rep. Warren. “Both Democratic and Republican lawmakers recognize that the protection of 20 percent of the world’s available freshwater is imperative and that is why we are calling on Presidential candidates from both parties to commit to fully fund Great Lakes Restoration.”

“Michigan is already doing our part by working to implement the Compact. It is time for the Presidential candidates to commit to protecting and restoring the health of the Great Lakes,” said Sen. Birkholz. “Every day we wait, the problems get worse and the solutions get more costly.”

Republican and Democratic Party leaders from key counties—including Genesee, Ingham, Kent, Macomb, Monroe, Oakland and Washtenaw—are sending the letters to candidates seeking the White House urging presidential candidates to embrace the restoration of the lakes.

“If presidential candidates want to make inroads in vital swing districts in a key battleground state, they would do well to embrace Great Lakes restoration in their platform,” said Stephanie Pazdro, chairman of the Macomb County GOP. “Great Lakes restoration is an issue that cuts across party lines and presents a rare opportunity for candidates to expand their base of support among voters.”

The push by Democratic and Republican Party officials and legislators comes a week after the eight Great Lakes governors, including Gov. Jennifer Granholm, publicly called on the candidates to restore the Great Lakes.

“The region is united,” said Robert Sisson, membership and development director for the Great Lakes Office of Republicans for Environmental Protection. “Great Lakes restoration is not an issue defined by political affiliation. It is defined by the urgent need to act now to protect a resource that is the foundation of our economy and way of life. Presidential candidates who turn their backs on the Great Lakes are failing to protect the needs of millions of people.”

Michigan, the Great Lakes state, has strong support for restoring the Great Lakes in the nation’s capitol. The state’s entire Congressional delegation has signed on to comprehensive federal legislation to restore the lakes based on the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Strategy, a plan crafted by over 1,500 citizens.

“Presidential support comes down to this: Committing to fully fund within 5 years the implementation of a comprehensive restoration plan to stop sewage contamination, halt the onslaught of invasive species, and address other serious threats,” said Brian Beauchamp, campaign manager, Michigan League of Conservation Voters. “It is time for presidential candidates to support manageable solutions to protect our lakes, our economy, our drinking water, and our way of life.”

Michigan and the other Great Lakes states contain 141 electoral votes and are considered a crucial component to winning the White House. Many of the local party officials sending letters hail from key swing districts in the state, including Macomb County. With so much public and political support, presidential candidates who fail to support Great Lakes restoration do so at their own political peril.

“The message these letters send is clear: Presidential Candidates looking for support from Michiganders Red or Blue must commit to restoring the health of the Great Lakes,” said Chris Grubb, field director for the Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition. “By failing to make a commitment to restoring the health of the Great Lakes, the 2008 Presidential candidates are thus far turning their back on Michigan and the other Great Lakes states.”

For more information: <http://www.healthylakes.org/>

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Contact:

Jordan Lubetkin, Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition, (734) 887-7109,
lubetkin@nwf.org

Chris Grubb, Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition, (734) 887-7104; cgrubb@nwf.org

Robert Sisson, Republicans for Environmental Protection, (269) 651-1808; rsisson@rep.org

Brian Beauchamp, League of Conservation Voters, (734) 222-9651; brian@michiganlcv.org