

THE NORTHEAST-MIDWEST SENATE COALITION

GREAT LAKES TASK FORCE

March 24, 2009

The Honorable Kent Conrad
Chairman
Budget Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Judd Gregg
Ranking Member
Budget Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member:

As you work to draft the Senate Budget Resolution, we are writing to urge you to include language that states that within funds provided for natural resources and the environment, there will be \$475 million in funding for the Great Lakes as indicated in President Obama's proposed Fiscal Year 2010 budget.

The Great Lakes are an important national treasure. Almost all of the Great Lakes' waters are a legacy of the glacier age with less than one percent renewed annually by precipitation and run off. They hold 90 percent of the U.S. surface fresh water and are the largest system of fresh surface water on earth. Over 40 million people currently rely on the Great Lakes for drinking water, and the global water demand is expected to double every 21 years.

Unfortunately, the health of the Great Lakes is threatened by aquatic invasive species, contaminated sediment, nonpoint source pollution, and habitat loss. According to some scientific views, the Great Lakes are at a tipping point. Failure to protect and restore the lakes now will result in more serious consequences.

Knowing the importance of the Great Lakes, over 1,500 federal, state, local, tribal and other stakeholders from the region spent over a year drafting the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Strategy Report in 2005. The Strategy Report is the blueprint for how additional federal resources may be spent to address the many threats facing the Great Lakes.

Last summer, President Obama made a promise to restore the Great Lakes, and including \$475 million in new funding for the EPA is a way to start following up on that commitment. We have long supported Great Lakes restoration, and we urge you to include language in the Budget Resolution that assumes that within funds provided for natural resources and the environment, there will be \$475 million in funding for the Great Lakes.

Sincerely,

George V. Voinovich
United States Senator

Carl Levin
United States Senator



Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator



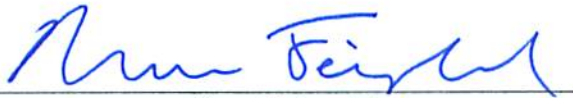
Dick Durbin
United States Senator



Arlen Specter
United States Senator



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



Russ Feingold
United States Senator



Charles Schumer
United States Senator



Kristen Gillibrand
United States Senator