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CONGRESS APPROVES GREAT LAKES COMPACT *Governors Applaud Historic Action to Protect the Lakes*

Chicago, Illinois—The Great Lakes Governors today applauded members of Congress for boldly acting to protect the Great Lakes--St. Lawrence River Basin. Specifically, members of the U.S. House of Representatives led by Congressmen John Conyers, Jr. (D-Michigan), James L. Oberstar (D-Minnesota), Vernon J. Ehlers (R-Michigan) and Steven C. LaTourette (R-Ohio) passed a joint resolution providing consent to the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Water Resources Compact.

Today's House action follows similar action by the U.S. Senate on August 1 led by Senators Carl Levin (D-Michigan) and George V. Voinovich (R-Ohio). The resolution now goes to President George W. Bush who has committed to sign it. These actions complete a historic process to protect the Great Lakes.

In December 2005, following a nearly five-year negotiation, the Governors of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin reached agreement on the Compact. The Compact provides a comprehensive management framework for achieving sustainable water use and resource protection. The eight Great Lakes States reached a similar, good faith, agreement with Ontario and Québec in 2005, which the Provinces are using to amend their existing water programs for greater regional consistency.

During 2007 and 2008, each of the eight Great Lakes State legislatures ratified the Compact. Today's Congressional action completes the legislative approval process.

Wisconsin Governor Jim Doyle, Council of Great Lakes Governors Chair, said, "I applaud the members of Congress for their leadership in protecting the Great Lakes. Today's action reflects a successful partnership—one that we hope to build on in order to take even bolder steps to protect our Great Lakes. We look forward to continuing to work with Congress and other partners toward this shared goal."

Michigan Governor Jennifer Granholm said, "By approving the Great Lakes Compact today, Congress has acted in a historic manner to ensure that the Great Lakes are protected for future generations. I thank Congress for its quick action on this important matter and look forward to the President's signature."

“Passage of the Great Lakes Compact is central to ensuring that harmful water diversions are controlled and this precious ecosystem is protected for future generations,” said New York Governor David Paterson. “The Great Lakes, constituting nearly twenty percent of the world’s available fresh water and ninety percent of the United States’ supply of fresh surface water, need to be protected and cherished. I applaud the Members of Congress who supported the Great Lakes Compact and the Great Lakes states’ desire to conserve our resources.”

“Congress did the right thing today in approving this landmark agreement,” Ohio Governor Ted Strickland said. “I am particularly thankful to the members of Ohio’s Congressional delegation, whose leadership was critical to today’s victory. Lake Erie and the other Great Lakes are national jewels and this Compact will help ensure they will be valued and protected for generations to come.”

The Compact includes the following points:

- Economic development will be fostered through sustainable use and responsible management of Basin waters.
- In general, there will be a ban on new diversions of water from the Basin but limited exceptions could be allowed in communities near the Basin when rigorous standards are met.
- Communities that apply for an exception will have a clear, predictable decision making process; standards to be met; and, opportunities to appeal decisions. These processes and standards do not exist under current law.
- The States will use a consistent standard to review proposed uses of Basin water. The States will have flexibility regarding their water management programs and how to apply this standard.
- Regional goals and objectives for water conservation and efficiency will be developed, and they will be reviewed every five years. Each State will develop and implement a water conservation and efficiency program that may be voluntary or mandatory.
- There is a strong commitment to continued public involvement in the implementation of the Compact.

A broad, bi-partisan consensus has been built in support of the Compact. The Compact was developed in collaboration with regional partners who have also played a key role in its implementation. Members of Congress, Mayors, local government officials and stakeholders have all been instrumental.

The Great Lakes are a national treasure—important to our nation and the world as both an environmental and economic asset. Our national economy depends on the Great Lakes for industrial uses, hydropower, maritime commerce, agricultural irrigation and many other uses. The Great Lakes are also a globally unique and important environmental resource. The Compact will ensure that the Lakes are used sustainably in order to continue to provide benefits to us all.

Additional information is available at www.cglg.org.

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