



GREAT LAKES 2020 PRESIDENTIAL AGENDA

*An agenda from the Governors of
Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin*

In the Great Lakes region, the health of our communities and the strength of our economies depend on protecting our shared waters. The region encompasses Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and New York containing over 84 percent of the country's fresh surface water.

We represent a thriving, \$6 trillion regional economy supporting over 51 million jobs. We are home to over 107 million people and our shared waters supply the drinking water for over 48 million people. Our economy, heritage, and quality of life depend on the health of our Great Lakes. But right now, the Great Lakes and the people of our states are facing dangerous threats to our water and our public health.

Everyone deserves to be able to turn on the tap and drink their water safely, but right now, in the region with 84 percent of the country's fresh water, far too many families can't access clean, safe drinking water in their communities. It's time for leaders everywhere to come together and work to ensure that every community has clean and affordable drinking water.

Protecting our Great Lakes and the communities that rely on them requires us to confront familiar but pressing threats like pollution, algae blooms, and dangerous invasive species like Asian carp, as well as emerging threats such as per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS).

We cannot sit back and wait while these problems get worse. The ecological, economic, and health risks are too high. We must act now; and we must act together.

This will require all of us to take bold action and partner with the federal government to ensure we are doing everything we can to protect our fresh water. For the health of our families, our economy, and the 51 million jobs in our region, it's crucial that we make cleaning up our Great Lakes and drinking water a priority right now.

We are ready to partner with the federal government and future leaders to ensure we continue working to protect the Great Lakes and the people who call this region home. **The Great Lakes region makes up 25 percent of the electoral college and includes multiple swing states critical to any candidate for President of the United States.** The shared priorities of the Great Lakes region should be the shared priorities of all Americans.

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As such, we respectfully request that any candidate running for President of the United States, pledge their support for the following Great Lakes platform:

**“The Great Lakes region makes up
25 percent of the electoral college”**

Triple the federal investment into the Clean and Drinking Water State Revolving Loan Funds immediately to address our region's \$179 billion backlog in drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater infrastructure so all our residents have access to clean, safe, and affordable drinking water.

The Great Lakes region is facing a water infrastructure crisis. Communities across the region are grappling with crumbling and unsafe drinking water and wastewater infrastructure—a staggering \$179 billion over the next 20 years is needed in improvements, upgrades, and repairs. Legacy contaminants like lead, which derive from outdated and dangerous infrastructure such as lead service lines, pose a significant public health risk, particularly for children and infants.

The federal government's contribution to water infrastructure has declined from 63 percent of spending in 1977 to 9 percent today. These costs are passed on to those who can least afford it with water utility bills doubling or tripling over the last decade in many cities. These challenges are only expected to get worse, as our changing climate will lead to more rainstorms that overwhelm sewer systems and push our current infrastructure to its limits.

Ramp up funding for Great Lakes Restoration Initiative to \$475 million per year to boost the region's work of cleaning up toxic contamination, reducing runoff pollution, stopping invasive species, and protecting and restoring wetlands and other habitats.

As a result of bipartisan support in Congress and in states throughout the region, we've seen great progress due to the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. We have cleaned up one-third of the region's most toxic hotspots, sparking redevelopment and business opportunities on waterfronts. Area farms and conservation organizations have increased conservation practices, which have reduced harmful nutrient runoff, and habitat and wildlife connectivity continue to improve with nearly 5,000 miles of rivers cleared of dams and other barriers.

This demonstrates real progress, but we still have a lot of work to do, if we are going to ensure every person has clean communities to live, safe beaches to enjoy, and healthy fish to eat. We must act now, because as our changing climate brings new threats to the Great Lakes region, our work will only become more challenging.

Support, fully fund, and expedite the plan to build new prevention measures at Brandon Road Lock and Dam and support strong ballast water rules for every Great Lakes vessel to help stop and control the introduction and spread of invasive species in the region.

Aquatic invasive species can alter the basic functions of the Great Lakes and all waterways, disrupting fisheries, wildlife, and water supplies. The Great Lakes ecosystem has been severely damaged by more than 180 invasive and non-native species. The Great Lakes support a \$7 billion fishing industry, which is directly threatened by approaching non-native Asian carp. In places in the Illinois River, where the carp have taken over, these invasive fish make up 90 percent of the aquatic life present.

The Army Corps of Engineers must work with the region to push the Brandon Road Lock and Dam project over the finish line to ensure Asian carp do not move into the Great Lakes watershed. Completing this project will require strong regional partnerships and significant federal resources. The benefits of finishing Brandon Road go beyond the Great Lakes. It will provide solutions and tools that can be utilized in waterways across the nation to combat invasive species.

Commit to assist states in meeting their goals of reducing nutrient pollution in the Western Lake Erie basin by 40 percent by 2025 through federal funding, resources, and new technologies while continuing to monitor, report, and reduce nutrient pollution in the other Great Lakes and regional water bodies.

“Everyone deserves to be able to turn on the tap and drink their water safely”

Harmful algal outbreaks threaten our drinking water, economy, outdoor recreation, and fish and wildlife. In 2014, a toxic algal outbreak blanketed Western Lake Erie, prompting Toledo city officials to issue a “do not drink” advisory impacting nearly 500,000 people. Little progress has been made towards the 40% reduction target for 2025, and both observed and projected climate change impacts, such as increases in heavy rainfall and rising temperatures, are increasing the threats posed by harmful algal blooms in Lake Erie and across the region.

This problem is not isolated to the Western Lake Erie basin. Toxic algae impacts waterways across the region, including other portions of the Great Lakes themselves. This was highlighted in a recent discovery of suspected toxic algae in Eastern Lake Erie less than 10 miles off Pennsylvania's shore.

“We cannot sit back and wait while these problems get worse.”

Support federal funding for ports, harbors, and critical marine infrastructure including the Soo Locks reconstruction project at Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan.

In addition to \$52 million provided by the State of Michigan, \$900 million is needed to modernize the Soo Locks and ensure they remain operational through reconstruction. Additionally, support increased and more proactive spending of maintenance funding for ports, harbors, and other critical marine infrastructure assets on the deep-draft system that would cover the needed preservation and upgrades to the Poe Lock. The Soo Locks at Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, are a vital component of the nation's infrastructure.

A six-month unplanned closure at the Soo Locks would devastate the production of integrated steel, automobiles, and other heavy equipment throughout North America, decreasing U.S. gross domestic product by \$1.3 trillion, costing the U.S. more than 11 million jobs.

While the economic impact would be most severe in Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio, an unplanned closure of the Soo Locks would ripple across national supply chains, eventually leading to a full shut down of steel production in Pennsylvania. The Soo Locks are the single point of failure that could cripple Great Lakes shipping and the North American economy.

Push for increased federal action of both the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Department of Defense (DOD) to address PFAS contamination.

Across the Great Lakes region, states are tackling the challenge of addressing toxic contaminants like PFAS chemicals. States are looking to the federal government for financial resources and leadership in establishing drinking water standards. EPA-mandated testing of large public water systems throughout the country and including each state in the region revealed high PFAS contamination levels in systems serving over 16.5 million Americans.

Further testing by individual states has revealed deeper concerns and new toxicological research has led to nationwide concern that existing drinking water standards may not be sufficiently protective of public health. The U.S. DOD counts more than 400 active or closed military bases with at least one known or suspected release of PFAS chemicals, including installations in each of our states.

While the EPA has indicated that it is moving forward with a long awaited PFAS Action Plan, the timeline for the establishment of protective drinking water standards remains uncertain. In the interim, states have stepped up to establish their own standards to protect their residents.

This document is signed by the following Great Lakes Governors:

Governor JB Pritzker
Illinois

Governor Gretchen Whitmer
Michigan

Governor Tim Walz
Minnesota

Governor Tom Wolf
Pennsylvania

Governor Tony Evers
Wisconsin

