

Letter to the Editor:

The White House's agenda is nothing less than a nightmare for people who value clean water, clean air, and a healthy environment. And those of us in the Great Lakes Region stand to be hit the hardest. The president's proposed budget would eliminate funding for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) from \$300 million to \$0.

The League of Women Voters wholly opposes this catastrophic assault on public health. We call on [names of local elected officials] to oppose it as well.

The Great Lakes Region spans eight states and a population of more than 30 million. Since 2010, the GLRI has made great strides to clean, protect, and preserve the invaluable natural resources on which we all rely. Eliminating the GLRI is unconscionable and serves no public interest. It would save taxpayers less than the president has spent on weekend trips to his private club, while imposing a brutal cost on millions of people for decades to come.

Without the GLRI, little restoration, protection, or research will be possible to ensure the future health of our natural treasures. Yet we should be increasing, not abandoning, our investment in the Great Lakes.

Wastewater and drinking water systems throughout the region are in dire need of improvement and/or replacement. The crisis still hurting our fellow citizens in Flint, Michigan—inflicted by government negligence just like that the administration is proposing—must be addressed. And no other American community must be allowed to suffer the same fate.

Our environmental protections are consistently popular with voters, and for good reason: The benefits are shared broadly by the entire American public. Without such protections in place, the only ones benefiting are narrow corporate interests. The costs, in the form of debilitating harm to our health and well-being, are shifted onto the rest of us. Studies show that economically disadvantaged communities suffer an even greater share of that harm.

Our representatives in Congress [or specific names] should reject the gutting of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative and commit to protecting the environment we all share. If they will not, we must ask: Whose interests they really are serving?

U.S. Reps. Dan Lipinski (D-Ill.), Bill Foster (D-Ill.), Mike Quigley (D-Ill.), Jan Schakowsky (D-Ill.), Robin Kelly (D-Ill.), Bobby Rush (D-Ill.), Danny K. Davis (D-Ill.), Brad Schneider (D-Ill.), Luis Gutierrez (D-Ill.), Bill Foster (D-Ill.), Cheri Bustos (D-Ill.), Darin LaHood (R-Ill.), Peter Roskam (R-Ill.), Rodney Davis (R-Ill.), and Raja Krishnamoorthi (D-Ill.) have indicated their support for full funding of the GLRI next year. Thank you to these Congressmen and Congresswomen for standing up for Lake Michigan and the Great Lakes.