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27TH DISTRICT, NEW YORK

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**Congress of the United States**  
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October 13, 2011

The Honorable Harold Rogers  
Chairman, Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
H-307, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Norm Dicks  
Ranking Member, Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1016 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Michael K. Simpson  
Chairman, Subcommittee on the Interior,  
Environment & Related Agencies Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
H-307, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable James Moran  
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on the Interior,  
Environment & Related Agencies Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1016 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Dicks, Chairman Simpson and Ranking Member Moran:

As you ready recommendations to the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction, I write to urge you to protect funding for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI).

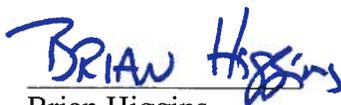
The Great Lakes are one of America's most overlooked and underappreciated national assets. They are the largest source of surface fresh water in the world, provide more than 30 million people in the region with drinking water, and boast a multi-billion boating, shipping, fishing, recreational and tourism economy. The Great Lakes fishery alone generates \$7 billion in economic activity and supports 75,000 direct jobs.

Yet, in order to provide safe drinking water and sustain these economic activities, the Great Lakes need to be healthy. The Great Lakes face many challenges to that end, including contaminated sediment, agricultural runoff, sewer overflows, and invasive species. Lake Erie in particular, which as the shallowest of the Lakes has greatest exposure to agriculture runoff and point source pollution, is exceptionally vulnerable to excess nutrients and phosphorus. This pollution leads to toxic algal blooms that rob the water of oxygen that fish and other aquatic species need to survive, negatively impacting the associated fishing industry and limiting the recreational use of the waterways. According to a recent report by the National Wildlife Federation, this past summer Lake Erie saw the most severe algal blooms since the 1960s. Leaving these threats unaddressed will lead to the degradation of the Great Lakes ecosystem and threaten the progress we are making in Buffalo toward reclaiming our waterfront as an engine of recreational and economic activity.

The GLRI represents our nation's recognition of the economic significance and environmental vulnerability of the Great Lakes. Fully funding GLRI will not only restore and protect the ecological health of the Great Lakes, it will lead to long-term economic benefit. A Brookings Institution report shows that for every \$1 invested in Great Lakes restoration results in a \$2 return in the form of increased fishing, tourism and home values. Buffalo alone would see economic gains between \$600 million to \$1.1 billion if the Great Lakes are restored.

I understand the challenge you are tasked with in making recommendations for spending cuts, but respectfully submit that for the reasons outlined above, the GLRI is a cost effective program that is worthy of America's investment. I urge you to encourage the Joint Committee to protect this essential economic and environmental investment in the Great Lakes. Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,



Brian Higgins  
Member of Congress