

(July 6, 2006) Lipinski Introduces Legislation to End Sewage Dumping in the Great Lakes

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Great Lakes Water Protection Act quadruples penalties and creates Great Lakes Clean-Up Fund

CHICAGO - To help ensure continued safe usage of our Great Lakes, Congressman Dan Lipinski introduced The Great Lakes Water Protection Act (H.R. 5734) late last week with Congressman Mark Kirk. This bipartisan legislation would establish a federal deadline to end sewage dumping in the Great Lakes and impose large fines on localities that violate the Act. These penalties would be paid into each state's Clean Water Revolving Fund which promotes the construction of sewer infrastructure to protect the Great Lakes.

"Since I was a kid I have always enjoyed the beaches and lakefront parks on Lake Michigan. As a society, though, we have taken the Great Lakes for granted, assuming they will always be here for us to use and to enjoy," said Lipinski. "In reality, it is becoming more difficult to utilize the lakes because of pollution. In Illinois alone, there were almost 800 beach closings in 2004 due to dangerous contamination, more than twice the number in 2003. Families who have enjoyed swimming in Lake Michigan for generations are now kept away because of fears of becoming sick - this is an unacceptable situation."

The Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago dramatically improved their sewer infrastructure to prevent the dumping of partially-treated raw sewage into Lake Michigan by building the Deep Tunnel. However, other cities along Lake Michigan have been slow to upgrade their sewer infrastructure and continue to pollute the lake.

H.R. 5734 gives cities until 2026 to build the full infrastructure needed to prevent sewage dumping into the Great Lakes. Those who violate EPA sewage dumping regulations after the federal deadline will be fined \$100,000 for every day they are in violation. Lipinski believes it is time for Great Lakes cities to be held responsible for the health of the lake system.