



## GREAT LAKES AND ST. LAWRENCE

CITIES INITIATIVE

## L'ALLIANCE DES VILLES

DES GRANDS LACS ET DU SAINT-LAURENT

*Mayors Protecting and Restoring the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River*

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## ***Priorities for Advancing Recovery and Revitalization for Great Lakes Cities***

### **2021 U.S. Federal Priorities for the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative**

*March 2021*

On behalf of its nearly 100 member mayors, the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative calls on Congress and the Biden Administration to provide economic relief for struggling cities and support critical water resources priorities by:

- Providing emergency financial relief to Great Lakes cities to sustain vital public services and infrastructure investments;
- Safeguarding drinking water and advancing equity in water services;
- Passing an infrastructure package to modernize water systems;
- Sustaining Great Lakes restoration and revitalization;
- Helping Great Lakes cities strengthen coastal resilience and respond to impacts from climate change;
- Protecting the Great Lakes from Asian carp and other destructive invasive species; and
- Strengthening the Great Lakes Navigation System to promote trade and create jobs.

Our local economies have been devastated by the COVID-19 pandemic and it is critical that we make every effort to accelerate the pace of economic recovery. With nearly one-third of U.S. economic activity centered around the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River, our region's recovery will fuel the larger, national economic recovery.

In the long term, investing in water infrastructure and coastal protection will address urgent needs, revitalize waterfront areas, and catalyze sustained economic activity. Restoring, protecting and sustainably developing these immense freshwater resources is an enduring, bipartisan priority for our communities.

The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative's mayors appreciate the support from Congress and the President for our agenda to maintain the Great Lakes as a natural treasure and economic engine for our communities. For more information, contact our executive director, Jon Altenberg (847-347-6947, [jon.altenberg@glslcities.org](mailto:jon.altenberg@glslcities.org)).

Mayor Mike Vandersteen  
Sheboygan, Wisconsin  
Chair, Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative



## ***Priorities for Advancing Recovery and Revitalization for Great Lakes Cities***

### **2021 U.S. Federal Priorities for the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative**

*March 2021*

#### **Provide Emergency Financial Relief to Great Lakes Cities to Sustain Vital Public Services**

- Pass the American Rescue Plan, the Biden Administration's COVID relief package, with a minimum of \$350 billion for state, local, and territorial governments to help Great Lakes cities maintain frontline workers, reopen schools, and get people vaccinated.
- Amend the CARES Act to enhance flexibility for the use of funding already appropriated to the Coronavirus Relief Fund by making "replacement of lost revenue" an eligible expenditure to aid state, county, and municipal governments with no population threshold for eligibility.
- Provide direct financial relief to local water and wastewater utilities to offset revenue losses and emergency operating costs incurred due to the pandemic.

#### **Safeguard Drinking Water and Advance Equity in Water Services**

- Fully fund the complete mapping of all lead service lines in the United States, on both public and private property, to provide a full awareness of the scope of the lead problem and the costs for addressing it.
- Create a Lead-Safe Communities Fund for the removal of lead paint, the funding of water pipe corrosion control treatment measures, support for state programs to identify and replace lead plumbing in individual homes, and the replacement of lead service lines on both public and private property. No unfunded mandates should be imposed on state or local governments, and cost-share requirements should be minimized or waived for low-income communities. Congress should also ban the partial replacement of lead service lines, and agencies removing lead water lines should not be liable for harm or damages should property owners refuse lead service line replacement.
- Make the new Low-Income Household Drinking Water and Wastewater Emergency Assistance Program permanent in the annual appropriations process and fund it at a comparable level to programs such as the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).
- U.S. EPA should establish a federal drinking water standard for PFAS and related compounds, restrict the use and sale of these substances, research their health effects and determine the scope of contamination they have caused. Congress should require the Defense Department to remediate PFOS and PFOA contamination from military bases.
- Provide full funding for Farm Bill agricultural conservation programs, including the Regional Conservation Partnership Program, which targets the Great Lakes as a "critical conservation area," to strategically target conservation programs that protect the Great Lakes from harmful algal blooms and safeguard drinking water.

### **Pass an Infrastructure Package to Modernize Water Systems**

- Provide \$20 billion over the next two years for the Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds (SRF) and other programs to modernize aging water infrastructure, protect public health, and create jobs. Minimize matching requirements and maximize subsidies for disadvantaged communities to reflect the fiscal constraints facing state and local governments.

### **Sustain Great Lakes Restoration and Revitalization**

- Provide \$375 million for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative to sustain the cleanup and revitalization of Great Lakes coastal communities.

### **Help Great Lakes Cities Strengthen Coastal Resilience and Respond to Impacts from Climate Change**

- Provide \$1.5 million for the Army Corps of Engineers' Great Lakes Coastal Resiliency Study, which was recently authorized by Congress.
- Provide \$500 million for federal programs that enable states and local communities to safeguard coastal resources and mitigate future damage from erosion, flooding, and severe storm events.
- FEMA should begin developing the program recently authorized by Congress in the Safeguarding Tomorrow through Ongoing Risk Mitigation Act (STORM Act), and Congress should provide \$100 million for the program, which authorizes grants to states to establish revolving funds for local governments for projects to reduce natural disaster risks, including shoreline erosion, flooding and high water levels.

### **Protect the Great Lakes from Asian Carp and other Destructive Invasive Species**

- Provide \$3.8 million to the Army Corps of Engineers to continue the engineering and design of the recently authorized Brandon Road Lock and Dam project to develop control technologies to prevent the introduction of Asian carp into the Great Lakes. Congress should adjust the nonfederal cost-share requirement for construction of the project to be full federal expense.
- The Army Corps of Engineers should complete the Great Lakes and Mississippi River Interbasin Study to prevent the transfer of aquatic invasive species (AIS) between the Mississippi River and Great Lakes watersheds.
- Provide funding for successful AIS programs, including the federal AIS task force, regional AIS panels and state AIS management plans established under the National Invasive Species Act, the Great Lakes Fishery Commission's sea lamprey control program, and the Asian Carp Action Plan.

### **Strengthen the Great Lakes Navigation System**

- Provide the Army Corps of Engineers with the funding needed to ensure continued, efficient construction of a new Soo Lock to safeguard the security and resiliency of the Great Lakes navigation system. In addition, \$37 million in construction funding is needed for upgrades to the existing Poe and MacArthur locks to support the operations of the new Soo Lock.
- Provide \$545 million from unspent revenue in the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund to address the backlog in dredging and maintenance of navigation infrastructure in the Great Lakes Basin.
- Provide \$40 million to start construction of a new heavy icebreaker and pass the Great Lakes Winter Commerce Act to support Great Lakes maritime winter operations.
- Provide \$300 million in the Maritime Administration's budget for Port Infrastructure Development Program, which provides grants to improve port and freight infrastructure in U.S. ports, including those on the Great Lakes.
- Provide U.S. Customs and Border Protection with the resources needed to facilitate cross-border movement of cargo and passengers, including a growing cruise tourism economy in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence navigation system.