



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

### **2022 U.S. Federal Priorities for the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative**

*February 2022*

On behalf of its more than 200 member mayors, the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative calls on Congress and the Biden Administration to support priorities that sustain economic recovery and catalyze long-term revitalization of Great Lakes cities. Investing in Great Lakes restoration, water infrastructure modernization, and coastal resilience will help shoreline communities safeguard drinking water, respond to impacts from climate change, revitalize waterfront areas, and accelerate economic growth.

Great Lakes 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 Jon Altenberg, Executive Director (847-347-6947, [jon.altenberg@glslcities.org](mailto:jon.altenberg@glslcities.org)).

### **Priorities for Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities**

#### **Remove Obstacles and Ensure the Efficient Administration of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act**

- Maintain regular funding for critical water infrastructure programs to ensure the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) *supplements* annual appropriations, as intended.
- Maximize the funding provided as grants or forgivable loans and provide direction to state programs to waive or reduce their requirements for matching funds from local recipients.
- Provide technical assistance to municipalities that lack the capacity to prepare funding applications, particularly small or disadvantaged cities or utilities.
- Ensure state agencies have the capacity needed to administer significantly higher funding levels and assist local municipalities in securing new funding.
- Provide funding for programs authorized, but not funded in the IIJA, including Water Workforce grants, Utility Climate Resiliency grants, and a 40-city pilot program for a low-income water bill assistance program.

#### **Pass the Build Back Better Act with \$550 Billion to Address Climate Change and Other Priorities**

- \$6 billion for NOAA to spend on resiliency work for coastal communities.
- \$9 billion for lead remediation projects, including lead service line replacement.
- \$225 million for grants to states and Tribes to provide assistance for low-income water customers.
- \$1.85 billion for sewer overflow and stormwater projects
- \$350 million for a new Great Lakes icebreaker.

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

- Implement the Administration's Lead Pipe and Paint Action Plan to deploy federal, state and local resources to replace all lead pipes over the next decade and remediate lead paint.

- Maintain annual appropriation levels for the Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds and other programs to accompany funding under the IIJA 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.
- 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.
- Accelerate implementation of EPA’s Strategic Roadmap to confront PFAS contamination, including setting limits to PFAS in drinking water, designating PFAS as a hazardous substance under the Superfund program, restricting PFAS from being released into the environment, cleaning up PFAS contamination, and investing in research and monitoring.

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

- Provide \$400 million for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative to sustain the cleanup and revitalization of Great Lakes coastal communities. This should be in addition to the supplemental funding provided in the IIJA.

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

- Provide \$3 million for the Army Corps of Engineers’ Great Lakes Coastal Resiliency Study and ensure engagement with Great Lakes mayors to ensure the study directly addresses the needs of coastal communities.
- FEMA should begin implementation of the STORM Act 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. The IIJA provided \$500 million for the program, so FEMA should move forward quickly with the program and work with states to ensure they are prepared to seek funding for state revolving loan funds.
- NOAA, FEMA, Army Corps of Engineers, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and other federal agencies should minimize barriers—such as cost-share requirements—to accessing programs that help local communities safeguard coastal resources and mitigate damage from erosion, flooding, and severe storm events, and ensure support for planning and project development activities.

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

- Congress should use the upcoming Water Resources Development Act to adjust the federal cost share for the Brandon Road Project to 100 percent in recognition of its national importance. The eight Great Lakes governors have also called for this change.
- 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**

- Fully fund harbor maintenance activities from the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund, consistent with the 2020 Water Resources Development Act, to address the backlog in dredging and maintenance of navigation infrastructure in the Great Lakes Basin.
- Pass the Build Back Better Act to fund a new heavy icebreaker for the Great Lakes. If it fails to pass, provide \$40 million to start construction of a new icebreaker. Pass the Great Lakes Winter Commerce Act to support Great Lakes maritime winter operations.

- Maintain baseline funding of \$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.