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LAKE ERIE'S WATER CAN GROW ECONOMY

The Great Lakes currently hold over 20 percent of the world's fresh water supply. This makes the Lake Erie water basin a highly desirable place to locate or expand industry. However, it also makes it susceptible to those outside of Ohio who want to use the abundant water supply for their own needs. All these factors led Ohio, and the other Great Lake states, to agree to a Compact to prohibit the removal of water outside of their respective basins. But, it also requires each state to manage its water use within its basin's boundary.

Enactment of implementing legislation, Senate Bill 170 and House Bill 231, is the final phase in Ohio's full implementation of the Great Lakes Compact (Compact) that was passed by all the Great Lakes states and signed by Pres. Bush in 2008. Both bills implement the required regulatory program in a protective and common sense manner while allowing for the use of the water by current and future users.

The legislation sets out reasonable thresholds a facility must meet before being required to obtain a permit. They are five million gallons per day (gpd) from Lake Erie and two million gpd from an inland body of water. While that may sound like a lot of water, let's put it in context. The city of Chicago alone, under a Supreme Court consent decree, is allowed to remove 2.1 billion gpd from Lake Michigan.

It's important to note that the Compact does not regulate water quality but rather water quantity. Ohio already has robust water quality regulations. As a matter of fact, there are over 482 sections of the revised code and 579 different administrative rules regulating surface water and ground water sources. Additionally, to date no credible scientific evidence has been presented that shows current water users are having an impact on Lake Erie.

The implementing legislation is supported by the Ohio Chamber and a broad range of statewide industry groups. In order to remain economically competitive, we need to encourage ongoing investment by utilizing the abundant water resources we have available. These collective organizations believe the implementing legislation ensures that the resource is maintained while continuing to provide adequate water supplies for transportation, recreation, homes, critical infrastructure and high-technology manufacturing facilities.

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