

Dec 12 2005 - Slaughter Calls on Bush Administration to Implement Findings of Great Lakes Collaborat

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Asks White House to Fund GLRC, Prove Creation of Body Wasn't Election Year Political Stunt

Washington, DC - Rep. Louise M. Slaughter (D-NY-28), Ranking Member of the House Rules Committee and a Co-Chair of the Congressional Great Lakes Task Force, today issued the following statement in response to the release of the final report of the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration (GLRC):

"The Great Lakes Regional Collaboration has done a superb job over the past year diagnosing the ecological problems the Great Lakes face and the prescriptions needed to treat them," Rep. Slaughter said. "The recommendations contained within its report should be seen as a vital contribution to the ongoing effort to preserve the human and wildlife dependent on the Lakes, and the basis for future action on their behalf."

"It is now incumbent on the Bush Administration to do more than just pay lip-service to the Great Lakes region," Rep. Slaughter continued. "Our concern has always been that the creation of the GLRC was a political stunt carried out by the Administration during an election year. Now is the White House's chance to put this suspicion to rest."

"Beginning with the 2007 budget, the Administration must demonstrate that it has taken the collaboration seriously and direct more federal dollars to Great Lakes programs. Allowing short-sighted budget concerns to trump the work of the dedicated professionals of the GLRC would imperil one of our national treasures. It would also put the health and well-being of tens of millions of Americans, as well as the economic activity they produce, at risk. As Co-Chair of the Congressional Great Lakes Task Force, I will continue working with my colleagues to make the Administration uphold its promise to commit itself to this crucial cause."

"The Great Lakes Task Force has shown us the right path to take. It is now up to the Administration to do what we all know to be right," Rep. Slaughter concluded.

BACKGROUND

In May, 2004, President Bush issued Executive Order 13340. The bill established a federal interagency task force to streamline Great Lakes programs and make them more efficient. It also directed the EPA to create the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration of National Significance (GLRC).

The GLRC is a collaborative partnership of key members from federal, state, and local governments, tribes, and other stakeholders for the purpose of developing a strategic plan. This strategy is intended to build upon the extensive regional efforts to date, working together toward common goals of restoring the Great Lakes.

The GLRC today released its final report containing its findings and recommendations for the future. The Collaboration's original goal was for the Bush Administration to endorse the final report and commit to increased funding for the Great Lakes. However, last month, word leaked out that the White House is going to consider the final report as an "advisory" and, due to budget constraints, will not commit to new funding.

Failure to obtain Administration support for the GLRC final report would greatly reduce the value of the Collaboration effort and diminish the significance of its hard and commendable work.