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MAYOR DALEY SUPPORTS FEDERAL LEGISLATION TO PROTECT GREAT LAKES

Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley praised legislation introduced today in Congress to restore and protect the Great Lakes, and called on lawmakers to give it prompt consideration. The Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Implementation Act was introduced in both the House and Senate.

"The Great Lakes are absolutely vital to the quality of life of millions of people in the United States and Canada," the Mayor said. "Long-term protection of the lakes requires a strong commitment from all levels of government, and I'm pleased that our federal lawmakers are taking this important step forward."

The legislation, which has bipartisan support, had been recommended by the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative (GLSLCI) as a result of the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration process launched by the Bush Administration in 2004. The GLSLCI is a coalition of 48 U.S. and 37 Canadian mayors of cities and towns located along Great Lakes shorelines. Daley is the group's chair.

The legislation includes:

Stronger controls to keep invasive species out of the Great Lakes and other important waterways.

Authorization for two electric dispersal barriers in the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal to stop Asian carp from migrating to the Great Lakes.

Increased federal assistance to local governments to repair aging water infrastructure and eliminate sewage overflows into the Great Lakes.

1. Increased funding to clean up the most contaminated areas of the Great Lakes.

2. Increased funding for communities to restore and remediate waterfront areas.

3. Improved coordination of Great Lakes programs by federal agencies and enhanced partnerships with Great Lakes mayors, governors and tribes.

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The bills are sponsored by Senators Mike DeWine (R-Ohio) and Carl Levin (D-Michigan) and Rep. Rahm Emanuel (D-Illinois) and Vernon Ehlers (R-Michigan). Other members of Congress, including many from the Chicago region, are co-sponsors.

Daley said local governments have invested considerable money and effort into protecting the Great Lakes.

"We are implementing innovative changes in water policy and sustainable building practices; stepping up efforts to conserve water; protecting our shorelines from erosion; and passing ordinances to stop invasive species," he said. "But we can't do it alone. The Great Lakes are a national resource, and they require a national commitment."