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Mayors Issue Great Lakes Challenge to Presidential Candidates **Local Leaders call for joint action to protect Great Lakes and St. Lawrence by all Governments**

Racine, WI Mayors of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative (GLSLCI) issued a challenge today to U.S. presidential candidates to take definitive action on the Great Lakes. Local leaders also called for coordinated action on the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence by the U.S. Congress, state legislatures, the governments of Canada, Ontario and Quebec, and other local governments, citing the importance of the resource as one of the largest surface freshwater supplies in the world. The challenge was issued during the GLSLCI Midyear Board of Directors Meeting, which was hosted by the Mayor of Racine and current GLSLCI Chairman, Gary Becker, at the Johnson Foundation Wingspread Conference Center.

“Local governments have shown initiative and leadership in protecting the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence. This commitment needs to be matched across all levels of government,” said Mayor Richard M. Daley of Chicago, founding United States Chairman of GLSLCI. “Today, we call upon elected officials and candidates for office in the upcoming elections to publicly commit to concrete policy positions regarding the preservation and management of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence.” The following challenges were issued:

Presidential Candidates: The Mayors urged presidential candidates to support the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Water Resources Compact, the agreement through which the Great Lakes States and Provinces cooperatively manage the waters of the Great Lakes, and to support legislation to implement the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Strategy. The Strategy, developed in 2005 through the work of 1,500 Great Lakes stakeholders, is a comprehensive blueprint for restoring and protecting the resource and requires federal support and funding for implementation. “Our presidential candidates are in a unique position to help elevate the issues and threats faced by the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence to a national priority,” Mayor Daley said. “The public deserves to know where the candidates stand on these topics and we will be sending a questionnaire asking each of them to state their positions on a number of critical issues currently facing the Great Lakes region.”

U.S. Congress: GLSLCI Mayors believe the U.S. Congress and state legislatures have a duty to address the needs of the Great Lakes region. “In the new year, Congress must move forward with passing legislation to implement the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Strategy, particularly with respect to ballast water controls and water infrastructure funding,” said Mayor Becker. “Local governments are doing their fair share. Federal and state governments must step up and take some responsibility.” GLSLCI Mayors specifically encouraged the state legislatures of Indiana, Michigan, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin to pass legislation to implement the Compact. Without passage in all eight state legislatures, the Compact cannot become federal law.

Governments of Canada, Ontario and Quebec: GLSLCI Mayors called upon the Governments of Canada, Ontario and Quebec to include local governments in renegotiating the Canada-Ontario Agreement Respecting the Great Lakes Basin (COA) and the St.

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Gary Becker, Mayor of Racine, Chair

Richard M. Daley, Mayor of Chicago, Founding United States Chair

David Miller, Mayor of Toronto, Founding Canadian Chair



Lawrence Plan in 2010, separate agreements that outline actions to guide protection of the Great lakes and the St. Lawrence River. “Cities invest massively in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence, and make daily decisions that affect their quality and quantity. The local level of government must be at the table when crafting an action plan to protect these precious waters,” said Mayor David Miller of Toronto, the founding Canadian Chair of GLSLCI.

Under COA, the Government of Canada should complete work to delist remaining Ontario Areas of Concern (AOC). “These environmentally damaged areas, which are plagued by issues like contaminated sediment, have been a blight in our communities for far too long. Cleaning them up will revitalize neighborhoods, increase property values, and add to our communities’ quality of life,” said Mayor Lynn Peterson of Thunder Bay, Vice Chair of GLSLCI.

Governments of Ontario & Quebec: A key challenge issued to the Provincial governments of Ontario and Quebec, in addition to helping support municipal involvement in COA and the St. Lawrence Plan, and to delist AOCs, is to implement aggressive water conservation plans under the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Sustainable Water Resources Agreement. “The low lake levels we are experiencing around the Great Lakes are a constant reminder that we must take great care in our use of this precious resource,” said Mayor Peterson. “Local governments and GLSLCI have shown leadership in promoting water conservation. Provincially set targets are essential to push our residents and businesses to the next level of conservation.”

Local Governments: Recognizing the action-oriented nature of local government, GLSLCI Mayors urged local officials in Canada and the U.S. to accelerate efforts to reduce sewage overflows, expand water conservation efforts, and solve beach contamination problems.

Founded by Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley in 2003, the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative is a binational coalition of mayors and other local officials that works actively with other orders of government to advance the protection and restoration of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River. For more information, please visit www.glslcities.org.

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