



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF WISCONSIN
EDUCATION FUND**

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March 10, 2008

To: Assembly Committee on Natural Resources

Re: Support Senate Bill 523/Assembly Bill 915, the Great Lakes Compact

The League of Women Voters of Wisconsin strongly supports SB 523/AB-915, the Great Lakes Compact, which is the outcome of a five-year process of negotiations among the eight Great Lakes States and Canada. The Compact will protect Great Lakes water supplies by implementing an effective water management plan, including protections against water diversions out of the basin and the promotion of water conservation measures within the basin.

The Great Lakes are the world's single largest source of fresh surface water and contain 95 percent of the fresh surface water of the United States. The water of the Great Lakes is a critical resource, providing drinking water for people in the region, numerous industrial uses, navigation, energy production, recreation and tourism, and important fish and wildlife habitat. The economic value is tremendous, and we should not lose it. Although the Great Lakes appear abundant, only about one percent of the water is renewed each year, leaving the Lakes vulnerable to depletion.

The economic value to Wisconsin's communities is tremendous, and we should protect this resource.

Without the protection provided by the Compact, uncontrolled withdrawals and diversions from the Basin could pose serious environmental harm to the entire Great Lakes system. Lowering water levels could result in impacts to power generation, agriculture, industry, property values, tourism, and negatively impact the entire Great Lakes ecosystem, including an increase in shoreline and stream erosion and increasing susceptibility to contamination from pollution and invasive species including our Wisconsin lakes and rivers.

As valuable and fragile the Great Lakes are there are some who oppose the Compact. They oppose the Compact because of the "one veto" provision and fail to recognize the real power it gives Wisconsin.

They believe another state will use the veto to deny water to an eligible Wisconsin community. They are being misled. The eligible community that meets the guidelines set forth in the Compact will qualify and receive the water. If a governor of another state vetoes the request, there is an appeal procedure that will get the qualified community the water. The argument they present is one that could kill the Compact and do economic harm to communities such as Kenosha, Racine, Milwaukee, Port Washington and others on Lake Michigan and Lake Superior.

Taking a moment to consider the real power of the "veto," they would realize that the "one veto" rule puts Wisconsin in a very powerful position to protect our interests. Wisconsin does not need to get a majority of the states to protect us. Wisconsin can protect the Great Lakes, our lakeshore, our communities and our economic development with ONE VETO!! That is the real power Wisconsin can have with the passage of the Compact.

The LWV urges passage of this bill. To not pass the bill likely will lead to the death of the Compact and a possible flow of water to other states and countries. It has been tried and without the Compact it could happen again.