



*THE NORTHEAST-MIDWEST COALITION*

## **GREAT LAKES TASK FORCE**

September 16, 2005

The Honorable David M. Walker  
Comptroller General  
U.S. Government Accountability Office  
441 G Street NW  
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Walker:

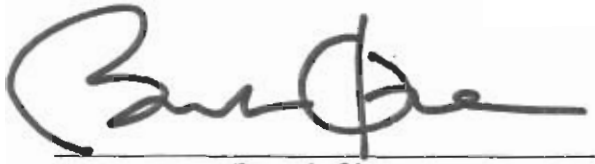
Contaminated water along Great Lakes beaches continues to be a human health threat to swimmers and others that come in contact with the water. Water borne illnesses have been reported in several states, some with serious consequences. In October 2000, the Beaches and Environmental Assessment and Coastal Health Act of 2000 was passed to address many of the problems associated with this problem. Under the act, EPA provides grants to states, local governments, and tribes to augment their monitoring of beaches and reporting to the public when beaches are closed for health reasons. In addition, EPA announced a Clean Beaches strategy in April 2004 which includes a Clean Beaches Plan.

While the Act and EPA's plan call for specific actions to address contaminated beaches, the closing of beaches remains a frequent occurrence for the Great Lakes. We are concerned that progress under the Act and EPA's Clean Beaches Plan is not progressing as anticipated and that the current process for closing beaches is not very rational or effective. Specifically, results from testing water off beaches for contaminants are often not obtained for days after sampling. In the mean time swimmers continue to be at risk until beaches are closed or posted.

We are requesting that you review the effectiveness of the implementation of the Beach Act and EPA's Clean Beaches Plan by the eight Great Lakes states for beaches within the Great Lakes Basin. As part of your review, please address the adequacy of funding provided to states under the act to protect beaches and whether it might be appropriate to direct some funding towards research and mitigation to help prevent beach closures in the first place, rather than directing all funding for beach monitoring and public notification of beach closures. In addition, please address whether the Act would be more effective if it distinguished between urban and non-urban beaches. Finally, please comment on any actions that could be taken to improve the quality of water off Great Lakes beaches.

Please coordinate your work on this assignment with Joy Mulinex (202-224-6221),  
Director, Great Lakes Task Force.

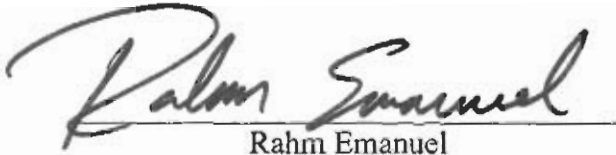
Sincerely,



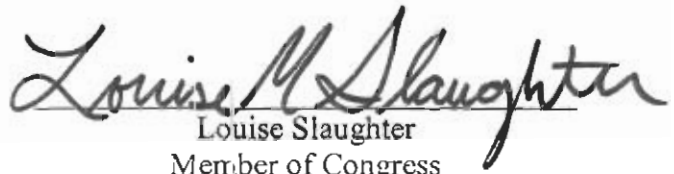
Barack Obama  
United States Senator



Mark Kirk  
Member of Congress



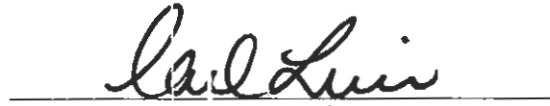
Rahm Emanuel  
Member of Congress



Louise Slaughter  
Member of Congress



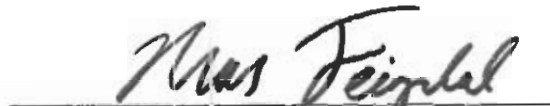
Mike DeWine  
United States Senator



Carl Levin  
United States Senator



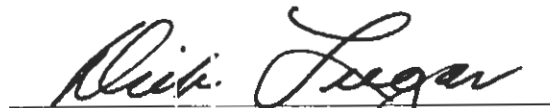
Richard Durbin  
United States Senator



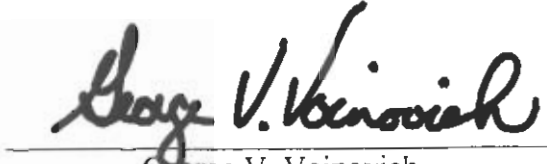
Russell D. Feingold  
United States Senator



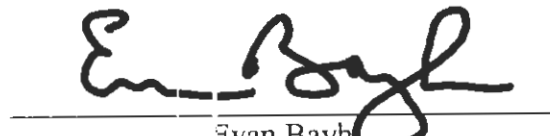
Debbie Stabenow  
United States Senator



Richard Lugar  
United States Senator



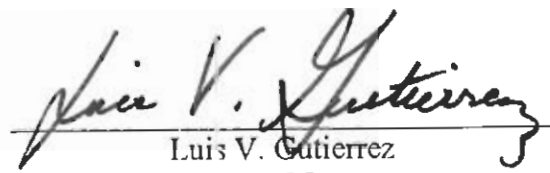
George V. Voinovich  
United States Senator



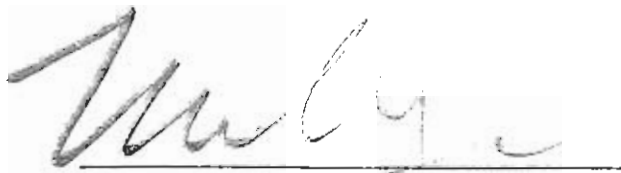
Evan Bayh  
United States Senator



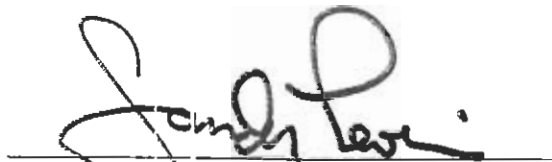
John Dingell  
Member of Congress



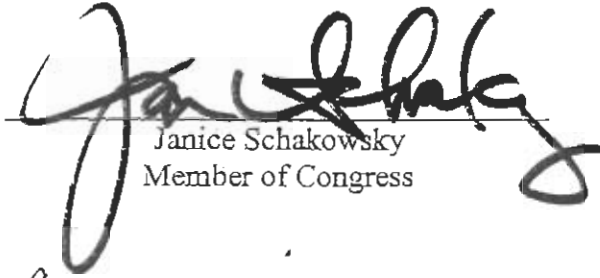
Luis V. Gutierrez  
Member of Congress



Mark Green  
Member of Congress



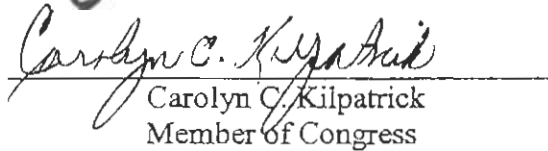
Sander M. Levin  
Member of Congress



Janice Schakowsky  
Member of Congress



Brian M. Higgins  
Member of Congress



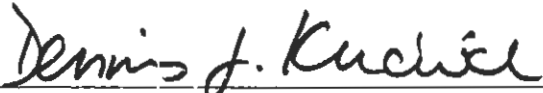
Carolyn C. Kilpatrick  
Member of Congress



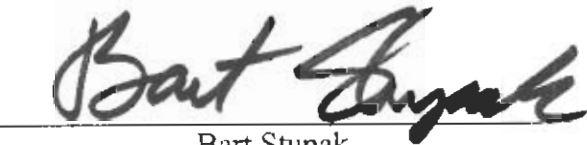
Dale Kildee  
Member of Congress



Lane Evans  
Member of Congress



Dennis Kucinich  
Member of Congress



Bart Stupak  
Member of Congress