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Statement

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As I stand here overlooking Lake Erie, I am reminded how vast and precious these Lakes are. Indeed, they have shaped the cultural and economic identity of this great city, Cleveland, and our great state, Ohio. And while the Lakes are in better health than the days of the Burning River, there is still more to do to ensure our children and grandchildren will be able to enjoy the Lakes as we do today.

Invasive species crowding out native species and saddling local governments with high financial burdens, sewage fouling our waterways, and wetland destruction continue to plague our Great Lake, and all of the Great Lakes.

The good news is that we have manageable solutions. It is time that we use them.

We have the Great Lakes restoration blueprint in the recommendations of the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Restoration and Protection Strategy and now we need the investment, the upfront capital to realize the tandem ecosystem and economic benefits.

Earlier this year President Obama included in his budget \$475 million for a Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, a step towards up-holding his campaign pledge of \$5 billion over 8 years to “kick-start” Great Lakes restoration. The full U.S. House of Representatives has fully funded the Initiative at \$475 million and now the Senate must act swiftly and fully fund the Initiative at \$475 million.

No longer are the days when we need to talk about the environment at the cost of the economy and vice versa. Restoring our Great Lakes will not only revitalize our economy and sustain jobs but create real and meaningful jobs. These jobs could include planners, designers, engineers, budget analysts, technical writers, and a number of different scientists, experts on hazardous solids and wastes, regulations, and property issues, laborers, real estate agents, retail and hospitality jobs and yes, even, lawyers – to name a few.

So as Congress heads back into session after Labor Day, their “back to school” lesson plan for the Great Lakes is to fully fund, at \$475 million, the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative - For our health, environment, and economy; for our quality of life.

Everyday we wait the problems get worse and the solutions more costly. That’s why Congress needs to complete its homework and ace this critical “lesson plan.”