March 17, 2009

To: Committee Members
Great Lakes and Environment
Appropriations Sub-Committee on Environmental Quality
Fr: Michigan League of Conservation Voters
Re: Wetlands Regulatory Authority

Dear Members:

The Michigan League of Conservation Voters would like to take this opportunity to express our opposition to the proposal to surrender Michigan's wetlands regulatory authority to the federal government. Our organization believes that this program is a critical component of the protection of our State's water resources, and that federal oversight of the program is grossly inadequate.

The discrepancies between State and federal policy on wetlands regulation pose very serious risks to our wetland resources and economic development. Federal regulation would endanger nearly 1,000,000 acres of wetlands that are currently covered by State law, but are not clearly defined under federal law. In addition, federal regulation would eliminate timely permitting. Michigan law requires permit decisions within 90 days of application, or 150 days if a public hearing is required. Federal law has no time limits on permit decisions.

Clearly, many acres of wetlands would be unregulated under federal authority, endangering water quality, flood control, and habitat preservation. Delays in permitting would significantly hinder economic development, slowing construction and eliminating jobs.

We ask that committee members take these factors into consideration when making a decision on this issue, and in turn avoid the politics involved that have been and will continue to distort the facts.

Finally, we respectfully remind members that regulating our wetlands has a direct affect on the quality of all of our water resources in the State, and that these resources must be guarded vigilantly for the sake of our natural resources, the health of our economy, and our overall quality of life.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Wozniak
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Michigan League of Conservation Voters

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