



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

MICHIGAN

EDUCATING AND ADVOCATING FOR RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT

February 9, 2016

To: Governor Rick Snyder

From: League of Women Voters of Michigan

Re: Waukesha, Wisconsin water withdrawal request under the Compact rules.

Dear Governor Snyder,

The League of Women Voters of Michigan is fundamentally opposed to the request for Great Lakes water by Waukesha, now under review. Our organization's position dates back to 1974, with additional member ratifications since then. Our primary concern was, and continues to be, similar to the goals of the Compact. We support protections of this resource from inefficient and excessive water uses. We accept that naturally varying levels and flows are part of the ecosystem and we view all the water in the Basin as 'in use'. New or increased withdrawals within the Basin should be carefully regulated. New or increased diversions to a place outside the Basin should be rejected.

We understand that allowances have been made for straddling cities within Basin counties under the rules of the Compact, but guidance from the Compact dictates that these requests be limited and conditional exceptions. Further, the requested amount includes localities unaffected by contamination. This request is tantamount to a blank check with future increases allocated and anticipated. Waukesha has knowingly resisted action on their problems for many years. However, the League of Women Voters of Michigan would not wish to expose the residents of Waukesha to contaminated water because of municipal inaction. For this reason only, any grant of water should be for limited, remedial use.

Studies indicate that alternatives to replacing Waukesha's radium contaminated water do exist, they are simply not as attractive to Waukesha as withdrawing from the Basin. A report commissioned by the International Joint Commission, published in December, 2015 warns of a precautionary approach to protect the Great Lakes from what could become ever-increasing requests.

The League of Women Voters of Michigan opposes this request as a long-term solution. However, the inaction of Waukesha's municipal leaders has put the people's health in jeopardy. As such, we can see value in approving a very limited and specific withdrawal as a means to protect the health of the citizen's of Waukesha. If a withdrawal is considered, we encourage the Compact leaders to be very specific that it is **only** to allow the water system sufficient opportunity to recharge and demand that Waukesha employ water conservation strategies that will ensure the long-term integrity of the Waukesha water system.

Thank you for your leadership on the Great Lakes Governor's Commission.

Sincerely,

Judy Karandjeff, President
League of Women Voters of Michigan