



Ohio House Democratic Caucus

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Toledo-Area Representatives Ask Governor to Show Leadership on Harmful Algal Blooms

COLUMBUS— State Reps. Teresa Fedor (D-Toledo) and Michael Sheehy (D-Oregon) are urging Governor Kasich to address the harmful algal blooms (HAB) that have devastated Lake Erie’s western basin during his State of the State speech tonight in Westerville. If a comprehensive plan is not laid out, the Reps. Fedor and Sheehy have announced they will introduce a resolution calling on the United States Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) to reconsider its list of impaired waters to include Lake Erie.

Tonight’s address and the announcement of this resolution come at an auspicious time, as the US District Court Judge Carr prepares to hear arguments in Advocates for a Clean Lake Erie’s federal lawsuit. Both the resolution and the suit, which will be supported by a crowd of concerned advocates and activists outside the Court, seek to have Lake Erie included on the list of “impaired” waters under the Clean Water Act.

“Even now, the state and federal government seem committed to ignoring the different threats to Lake Erie and the surrounding areas,” said Rep. Fedor. “It is past time to put Lake Erie—the people who build their lives there, the communities that depend on it, and the lake itself—first. I sincerely hope that the Governor addresses the safety of our homes and our Lake tonight.”

The resolution would recognize that Lake Erie’s western basin is facing a water quality crisis, plagued by pollution, HABs, and fish kills. Both Rep. Fedor and Rep. Sheehy were serving Toledo in the Ohio House of Representatives in 2014 when an algal bloom left 500,000 Toledoans without safe drinking water. Water in the western basin still requires massive doses of chlorine to be considered safe for consumption, continually impacting much of the region.

“The Governor has had years to come up with a serious solution to this problem,” Sheehy added. “This is his last chance to demonstrate real initiative on an issue that threatens the economic and environmental health of Northwest Ohio.”

Unlike Ohio, Michigan did include the open waters in its jurisdiction on its list of impaired waters that it submitted to the United States Environmental Protection Agency, which approved that list. The United State EPA already has declared Michigan’s portion of Lake Erie impaired and Rep. Fedor and Rep.

Sheehy believe that designation should be given to the portions of Lake Erie in Ohio's jurisdiction as well. This resolution calls for the U.S. EPA to make that designation now, in accordance with the U.S. Clean Water Act.

Mike Ferner, coordinator of Advocates for a Clean Lake Erie, said, "Representatives Fedor and Sheehy's resolution is the right thing at the right time. This spring and early summer Lake Erie will experience another flood of animal waste and other sources of excess nutrients, potentially turning it into a toxic soup in August. An impaired designation will require an inventory of all pollution sources and a timetable to hold polluters accountable. The sooner the better."