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February 4, 2010

Dear Colleague:

I am writing because of a Dear Colleague letter that came across my desk today asking members to sign a letter to me requesting additional funding for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. I take a backseat to no member regarding support for efforts to improve the Great Lakes. I have supported bills that do so throughout my years in the House.

But, I feel compelled to point out the irony that some members demand that programs be fully funded and then decline to support the bill that carries out that request. For instance, I would refer members to the passage of the Interior Appropriations bill last year, since that bill funded the Great Lakes Initiative at the requested, record \$475 million. It has been my experience that a number of members who profess concern about the Great Lakes in fact voted against the bill which contained that funding when it came before the House last year. I would ask whether that is enough to give hypocrisy a bad name.

As far as the Great Lakes Initiative is concerned, it has been one of my highest priorities for years and it will continue to be so. But, sometimes there are good reasons to trim even the programs we care most about. In the case of the Great Lakes Initiative, that program expanded last year from \$60 million to \$475 million, a huge increase. The Administration notes that because a large amount of that funding is not yet obligated, they may not be able to commit a similar amount this year. Our committee will look very carefully at the Administration's request to determine whether their proposed cutback is justified or whether it is not. We will decide that issue on the merits, not in a knee-jerk way. This is a multi-year program with a defined goal at the end and we are going to do it right.

Meanwhile, I would have some difficulty taking seriously members who pose for political holy pictures by sending letters asking for increased funding and then vote against legislation that carries that requested funding. I understand there are huge temptations in this institution to try to have it both ways. But, in a tight budget year, that is going to be very hard even for the most spectacularly inconsistent of members.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of my observations.

Sincerely,



David R. Obey