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**Contact: Jim Olson, Flow for Water 231-946-0044 [olson@envlaw.com](mailto:olson@envlaw.com)**

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## **Proposed Bill Jeopardizes the Great Lakes Compact**

Both Ohio's State House and State Senate have passed water legislation that could undermine the Great Lakes Compact by declaring water to be a commodity. The bill, HB 231, is on its way to the Governor's desk. It flies in the face of the Compact, the highly acclaimed 2008 agreement between the eight Great Lakes States and Congress crafted to protect the Great Lakes from exports and diversions.

**"If adopted, this legislation would allow anyone from anywhere to take 5 million gallons of Lake Erie water per day to do with it whatever they'd like – including selling it off," said Jim Olson, a leading Great Lakes water expert and advocate. "It invites the dry states in the southwest to come take our water."**

The approved legislation would shift control of Lake Erie bottomlands from public to private ownership and declare Great Lakes water to be a commodity just like corn, oil and gold if signed by Governor Kasich. Former Republican Governors, Taft and Voinovich oppose the legislation.

According to Olson, the legislation does not meet the requirements of the Great Lakes Compact." It is contrary to the express declaration in the Compact that waters of the Great Lakes Basin are "public resources held in trust. Water has belonged to the public since Roman times, protected under the Magna Carta and affirmed by the U.S. Supreme

Court. Government has the obligation to protect this right for its citizens, not give it away.”

“This legislation violates the water rights of communities, citizens, local businesses, local farmers and fishermen in Ohio that depend upon Lake Erie”, continued Olson. “The Ohio legislature has rewritten centuries of Great Lakes water laws in favor of corporations at the expense of the current users. Governor John Kasich should stand up, as have his predecessors, and refuse to sign this bill until it honors the water and all users, not international big business.”

**“If this bill were truly about creating jobs, why would we give control of our water to Wall Street? The greed of Wall Street has cost thousands of jobs, forced businesses to close and caused many to loose their homes in Ohio. It makes no sense to give the water to big business so we can buy it back from them.”**

Olson pointed out that the bill fails to recognize the Great Lakes and its citizens are all connected; what happens in Ohio will affect the rest of the Great Lakes waters, which they are held in the commons for all to use and enjoy.

“If the Ohio legislature succeeds, they will unravel the Compact and cause long-term adverse impacts to Lake Erie, its water levels, and its fisheries. If all the Great Lakes States and Provinces followed Ohio’s lead, the hard work that established the ban on diversions and exports through the Great Lakes Compact would be destroyed. Selling water like gold, corn or oil would mean the death knell for our precious Great Lakes,” Olson concluded.

Flow for Water [www.flowforwater.org](http://www.flowforwater.org) is a coalition of organizations from around the Great Lakes whose mission is “Saving the Great Lakes Forever!”

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