

MAY 24, 2002

**SCHAKOWSKY, OTHERS DEMAND EPA ACTION TO HALT EXCESSIVE DUMPING OF RAW SEWAGE BY MILWAUKEE INTO LAKE MICHIGAN**

**LAKE MICHIGAN BEACHES TO OPEN THIS MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND**

WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) today spearheaded a letter to Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Christine Todd Whitman demanding that the agency enforce the Clean Water Act to halt the excessive dumping of raw sewage by Milwaukee into Lake Michigan.

*In a letter, Schakowsky and her colleagues wrote, "Illinois experienced a record 339 Lake Michigan beach closings last year, up from 10 in 1994. While increased monitoring may have some effect on the number of closings, there is overwhelming evidence to suggest that sewage overflows from Milwaukee are responsible for much of the deteriorating beach health conditions in Illinois."*

*They added, "Milwaukee discharges a larger amount of waste into Lake Michigan than any other city. The city has drained nearly 1 billion gallons of sanitary sewer overflows-industrial, domestic, and other heavily polluted waste-into the Lake since 1995. Since the early 1990's, it is estimated that Milwaukee bypassed approximately 13 billion gallons of untreated wastewater into Lake Michigan."*

*"Because sewage overflows do not respect state boundaries, cause grave ecological and economic impacts to local communities, and infringe on recreational opportunities for Illinois residents, the EPA has a clear responsibility to enforce the federal Clean Water Act. We believe that EPA involvement is particularly necessary because Milwaukee's disposal of waste into Lake Michigan poses dangerous consequences to Illinois, Indiana, and some parts of Michigan. It is unacceptable that one city's harmful wastewater disposal practices should be allowed to endanger the health of citizens throughout the region."*

In addition to Schakowsky, the Letter was signed by the following members of the Illinois Congressional delegation: U.S. Representatives Rod Blagojevich, Bobby Rush, David Phelps, Jerry Costello, Lane Evans, Danny Davis and Jesse Jackson, Jr.

Attached is a full copy of the letter to EPA Administrator Whitman.

May 24, 2002

The Honorable Christine Todd Whitman, Administrator  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Administrator Whitman:

We are writing to make you aware of our concern over the amount of sewage that is being dumped into Lake Michigan by the city of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. We request that the Environmental Protection Agency take immediate action to enforce the Clean Water Act and stop this dangerous trend.

We are troubled that there are not adequate steps in place to hold dischargers accountable for sewage overflows that threaten public health and contribute to beach closings. Although sewage overflows have occurred in Chicago, they usually flow away from city beaches. Milwaukee, Wisconsin produces a greater, more serious level of waste. Milwaukee discharges a larger amount of waste into Lake Michigan than any other city. The city has drained nearly 1 billion gallons of sanitary sewer overflows-industrial, domestic, and other heavily polluted waste-into the Lake since 1995. Since the early 1990's, it is estimated that Milwaukee bypassed approximately 13 billion gallons of untreated wastewater into Lake Michigan.

Illinois experienced a record 339 Lake Michigan beach closings last year, up from 10 in 1994. While increased monitoring may have some effect on the number of closings, there is overwhelming evidence to suggest that sewage overflows from Milwaukee are responsible for much of the deteriorating beach health conditions in Illinois.

Because sewage overflows do not respect state boundaries, cause grave ecological and economic impacts to local communities, and infringe on recreational opportunities for Illinois residents, the EPA has a clear responsibility to enforce the federal Clean Water Act. We believe that EPA involvement is particularly necessary because Milwaukee's disposal of waste into Lake Michigan poses dangerous consequences to Illinois, Indiana, and some parts of Michigan. It is unacceptable that one city's harmful wastewater disposal practices should be allowed to endanger the health of citizens throughout the region.

Lake Michigan is the only Great Lake wholly within U.S. boundaries. The EPA has a special responsibility to ensure its protection for the benefit of the 10 million people who drink and enjoy this water for recreation. The EPA must take decisive action to ensure that the city of Milwaukee complies with the Clean Water Act, and that Lake Michigan is

**safe for the entire region to enjoy.**

**Again, thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to working with you to resolve this situation.**