



2025 Position Paper

STAND UP THE GREAT LAKES AUTHORITY

Summary:

In 2022, Congress enacted legislation to create the “Great Lakes Authority” (GLA), a new economic development agency for the Great Lakes Region. The authority is to be governed by a nine-member board with a federal co-chair appointed by the President, and one board member appointed by each of the eight Great Lakes Governors. The authority may hire an executive director and staff as necessary to carry out its duties. Congress authorized the authority to receive up to \$33 million per year in annual appropriations.

The GLA will focus on both economic and infrastructure development and may provide grant funding for worthwhile projects. While the authority’s mission is broad, it has a specific mandate to “develop the transportation infrastructure” of the region. This includes port infrastructure.

Position:

AGLPA urges the White House and Governors to move quickly to appoint the authority’s board.

Additional Background:

During the 117th Congress (2021-22), Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur (D-OH) and former Senator Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) introduced legislation (H.R. 7131, S. 5180) to create a new economic development agency for the Great Lakes region. Similar regional economic development entities have been created by Congress to serve Appalachia, Alaska, the Northeast, the Southeast and the Southwest. Although neither bill was ultimately enacted as written, Congress included language in the FY2023 Consolidated Appropriations Act to modify an existing federal statute (40 U.S.C. Subtitle V) and create the new Great Lakes Authority. That existing statute had been enacted in 2008 to create the Northern Border Regional Commission, the Southwest Border Regional Commission, and the Southeast Crescent Regional Commission. It also included general provisions giving mission and structure to each of those commissions. The FY2023 Consolidated Appropriations Act added the Great Lakes Authority as a fourth commission subject to the same provisions.

Those provisions provide for the following:

- The GLA will have a geographic jurisdiction that includes areas of the Great Lakes watershed in the states of Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and New York.
- The GLA will be governed by a nine-person board, made up of one person to be appointed by the President of the United States, and one board member appointed by each of the Governors of the eight Great Lakes states. However, no state is forced to participate.
- Day-to-day operations of the GLA will be administered by an Executive Director and such additional staff as the board deems necessary.
- The GLA will assess the needs of the region and develop economic and infrastructure development strategies, plans and programs.
- The administrative expenses of the GLA are to be shared by the federal government and participating states.
- The GLA may make grants to state and local governments, tribes and public and non-profit organizations for projects that enhance transportation infrastructure, telecommunications infrastructure, job and employment training, business development, basic healthcare, resource conservation, tourism, recreation, renewable and alternative energy, etc.
- The GLA is authorized to receive up to \$33 million per year in federal appropriations.

Congress included \$5 million in startup funds for the Great Lakes Authority in the FY2024 Energy and Water Development Appropriations Bill.