



MICHIGAN CHAPTER

3/24/2015

To: Chairman Franz and members of the House Regulatory Reform Committee
From: Mike Berkowitz, Sierra Club Michigan Chapter

RE: HB 4246 No Stricter Than Federal

The Sierra Club Michigan Chapter urges you to vote NO on HB 4246 (Farrington), a bill that would weaken protection for the Great Lakes and all aspects of Michigan's environment. This bill would prohibit the Governor and his/her agencies from issuing any regulation that is more stringent than federal law unless specifically authorized by the legislature. In effect it says there is nothing special about Michigan compared with any other state in the union.

Federal standards to protect environmental quality are designed to be a minimum standard below which states are not allowed to drop. They are intended to be a foundation which scientists, stakeholders and citizens can shape to meet that state's needs. Federal regulations are written as "one size fits all", with no particular accounting for the sensitivities and fragility of the world's most important freshwater resources: the Great Lakes.

Governor William Milliken directed his environmental agency to adopt controls on the amount of phosphorous in detergents when it became clear that this pollutant was contributing to killing Lake Erie. Scientists, sportsmen and community leaders throughout Michigan clamored for action, and the state's professional agency staff worked with those stakeholders to develop and adopt those controls. Lake Erie's amazing recovery is largely due to Michigan's leadership role. If HB 4246 had been in place at this time, Lake Erie would have been devastated because the Governor's hands would have been tied, and the legislature was not taking action.

Similar bills to HB 4246 were passed in the 1970's in North Carolina. Over the 20 year period these statutes were in place, North Carolina's air quality diminished drastically (among other environmental problems), and the 3 Governors in office during this period were not able to do anything to mitigate this. These bills were repealed in 1991 because of their harmful effects on North Carolina's environment. HB 4246 would likely have the same impact on Michigan, including damage to the Great Lakes.

The Sierra Club Michigan Chapter urges you to vote NO on HB 4246. Votes pertaining to this bill will be included in the Sierra Club's legislative scorecard. If you have any questions, please contact Mike Berkowitz at (517) 484-2372 Ext. 13.

Mike Berkowitz
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Sierra Club Michigan Chapter