POLLUTER PAY & WATER PROTECTION

Day of Action:
May 14th, 2020
Michigan
PURPOSE

The Sierra Club and our supporters will join together on May 14th to raise the visibility in the State Legislature of the Polluter Pay and Water Protection Legislative Packages and help advance the bills in the legislative process as we move forward out of the COVID-19 crisis. Faced with another economic recession, we must get critical protections in place to ensure that industrial contamination is cleaned up and disincentivized moving forward. HB 4212 and SB 116 would do just that.

The current crisis has highlighted the fact that universal access to water for drinking and bathing is essential to protecting public health. Right now, corporations are not even required to clean up contaminated aquifers unless they are currently in use for drinking water and corporations like Nestle are able to take and divert our water for relatively nothing. House Bills 5290-5292 will ban diversions of bottled water and strengthen protections for Michigan’s groundwater as a public trust resource.

HOW IT WORKS

When State legislative offices hear from constituents, they record the contact. If they receive numerous contacts on the same issue, they know the matter is important, and it can rise to the top of the office agenda, making it more likely the member of the legislature will make a decision on the matter, for example, whether to support it and call for a committee hearing on the bill.

On the pages that follow, Sierra Club provides information to help you understand the bills, look up your representatives in the state legislature, and access action alerts that make it easy to e-mail and tweet your State House Representative and Senator. Please share these details with colleagues, and encourage them to participate in the Virtual Lobby Day!

CONTENTS OF THIS GUIDE

1. PREPARE — Learn About The Water Protection Bill Package and Polluter Pay Bills
2. ENGAGE — Contact Lawmakers via E-Mail, Phone, & Social Media
3. FOLLOW-UP — Share Feedback & Thank Supporters
Learn about House Bills 5290-5292 “The Water Protection Package”
The Water Protection Package was introduced by State Reps. Yousef Rabhi (D-Ann Arbor), Laurie Pohutsky (D-Livonia) and Rachel Hood (D-Grand Rapids) to protect Michigan’s water resources and ensure they are managed in the interests of the people of the state. The three-bill package affirms that all the waters of the state are held in the public trust, bans the diversion of bottled water outside the Great Lakes watershed, and explicitly authorizes the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to protect water in its jurisdiction.

- [Access a summary for all three bills (HB 5290-5292)]
- [Clean Water Action information sheet on the Public Trust Doctrine and Great Lakes Compact]
- [Further Public Trust information from For Love of Water (FLOW)]
- [If you missed our polluter pay and water protection town hall: Watch it here!]

Learn about House Bill 4212 and Senate Bill 116 “Polluter Pay” Legislation
It's really quite simple--when corporations pollute the environment, they should have to pay to clean it up. Until 1995, Michigan had the strongest “polluter pay” law in the country. Michigan has since gutted the law and is now home to over 24,000 contaminated sites with taxpayers footing the bill for clean up. House Bill 4212 and Senate Bill 116 would hold polluters accountable and require them to clean up the pollution as much as technically feasible and make them foot the bill.

- [Access a bill summary of HB 4212 and SB 116]
- [Summary of How Michigan got to where we are today]
2. ENGAGE

STEP ONE - Ask the Chairmans of the Committees to Support Polluter Pay and the Water Protection Package

Both the Water Protection Package and Polluter Pay Bill are currently sitting in the House Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Committee, which is Chaired by Rep. Gary Howell (R-Lapeer). The Senate version of the Polluter Pay Bill is currently in the Senate Environmental Quality Committee, Chaired by Sen. Rick Outman (R-Six Lakes). In order for these bills to succeed and get through the legislative process, we need to demand that these chairs hold hearings on the bills in committee.

Use the Sierra Club Michigan Chapter’s Action Alerts to email them and ask that they hold hearings and support the polluter pay and water protection package. When you get to the action alert you will see that we have a pre-message already written out for you, but you will have the option to personalize the message as well.

Action Alerts

STEP TWO - Ask YOUR Own State Representative and Senator to Support Polluter Pay and the Water Protection Package

You can do this by either filling out an action alert put together by our partners at Clean Water Action below or by calling your State Representatives and Senators at their offices. You can also do both! If you do call your representative’s office (and you should!), be sure to follow the tips below. Again, in the action alerts you will be given the option to edit and personalize your message. Check this document to see if your Rep/Sen are sponsors/cosponsors of the bills. If they are, make sure to thank them for their support

Action Alerts
2. ENGAGE

Tips for when you call your legislator’s office:

- Be courteous to the staff on the phone. Identify yourself by name and share your hometown or community so they know you’re a constituent.
- Briefly state your position and what you would like your legislator to do, or what you’d like them to know about a particular issue.
- Be as succinct as possible. Make it clear how this issue affects you or your community.
- Ask for your legislator’s view on the bill or issue; ask for a commitment to vote for your position.
- If the legislator takes a position opposite to yours, it is OK to respectfully disagree and to highlight the impacts of this issue on you, your community. Make sure your representative knows this is important to you and your community. Do not argue.
- Offer to answer questions or supply any additional information. If they ask you a question and you don’t know the answer, just politely let them know that you do not know and that you will get the answer and follow back up with them.
- Remember: these calls are about the issues--avoid politics!
- Be respectful and polite! Be concise!

Agree or disagree--it's good to keep in touch with your local office and build a relationship and open dialogue. Just remember to be respectful--staff are part of the community, too.

SAMPLE SCRIPT

Hello, my name is _______, and I live in (City, State, Zip Code). I’m calling you about bills HB 4212/SB 116 (polluter pay) and HB 5290–5292 (public trust water protection). These bills will ensure we are able to hold polluters accountable for the messes they make and will protect our water resources from exploitation and pollution for generations to come. New research has shown the link between pollution and water scarcity and the exacerbation of COVID-19. The COVID-19 public health crisis now brings a more urgent need to address these issues. When we get through the Coronavirus pandemic I want to know that I can count on your support of these bills and to prioritize water protection and corporate accountability in any future recovery measures taken by the legislature.

Need Help Finding Your State Rep or Senator and their contact info? Use the link here for your State Rep. and this link for your State Senator.
2. ENGAGE

STEP THREE - Send a Tweet or Make A Facebook Post
If you're active on Twitter or Facebook, be sure to follow up your e-mail/call with a
tweet or Facebook post! Below are a couple of sample tweets and Facebook posts that
you can use.

Sample Tweets for Virtual Lobby Day
- #MISCVirtualLobbyDay We need [@ YOUR Rep] to support #polluterpay and
  #waterprotection legislation to hold polluters accountable and ensure the
  protection of our water resources.
- Studies have shown a link between areas with high pollution and the lethality
  of COVID-19 in those areas. We need legislators like [@your rep and @your
  senator] to make HB 4212/SB 116 and HB 5290-5292 a priority. #MISCVirtualLobbyDay

Sample Facebook posts/Instagram Captions for Virtual Lobby Day
- Studies have shown a link between areas with high pollution and the lethality
  of COVID-19 in those areas. Coming out of the COVID-19 crisis we need to
  make sure we are able to hold polluters accountable as well as protect our
  water resources. We need legislators like [@your rep and @your senator] to
  make HB 4212/SB 116 and HB 5290-5292 a priority. #MISCVirtualLobbyDay
- Our water resources have become more important than ever before. We must
  act to protect all of our water for public ownership to ensure that it is never
  for sale to the highest bidder. [@Your Rep] will you support House Bills 5290-
  5292 to protect Michigan’s water? #MISCVirtualLobbyDay
- Current Michigan law provides little accountability for polluters who poison
  our air, water, and land, often leaving taxpayers, and the very communities
  poisoned, to clean up the mess. This is unacceptable. [@Your Rep/Senator] it’s
  time for Michigan to lead again and hold polluters accountable by passing
  #polluterpay legislation. #MISCVirtualLobbyDay
- #PolluterPay legislation will put people first and make sure corporate
  polluters are held accountable for cleaning up their mess. [@Your
  Rep/Senator] will you support to hold polluters accountable?
  #MISCVirtualLobbyDay
2. ENGAGE

STEP FOUR - Take A Selfie

Take A Selfie Of you In Action with the below-linked sign and tag the Michigan Sierra Club

- **Facebook:** @SierraClubMichigan
- **Twitter:** @Michigansierra
- **Instagram:** @sierraclubmi

[Link to Sierra Club Lobby Day Sign]

Sample selfie from Tim Minotas

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3. FOLLOW UP

FINAL STEPS

If you receive a response from your State Legislator or their staff, let the Sierra Club Michigan Chapter know. If the legislator’s office has questions about the bill you cannot answer, Sierra Club’s legislative team can help. E-mail tim.minotas@sierraclub.org or Christy.McGillivray@sierraclub.org.

If you don’t already, follow The Sierra Club Michigan Chapter on Twitter (@michigansierra) and Facebook, and look for e-mail updates or posts from us for future opportunities to engage in grassroots advocacy.