Michigan’s two largest grassroots environmental advocacy organizations, Clean Water Action and Sierra Club, have released a joint legislative scorecard to hold legislators in Lansing accountable to their constituents. With a combined membership of well over 350,000 in Michigan, Clean Water Action and Sierra Club will make sure every member and supporter know how their elected officials have acted on key environmental issues like cleaning up toxic contamination from drinking water and protecting the Great Lakes from a Line 5 oil spill.

In 2018, Michigan voters went to the polls and voted overwhelmingly for candidates who promised to clean up our drinking water, hold corporate polluters accountable, and end the ongoing threat of Enbridge’s Line 5 pipeline. Unfortunately, in the 100th state legislature, positive steps in that direction have been few and far between. That is why this year the joint scorecard doesn’t focus on the incremental steps that were taken with nearly unanimous approval, but focuses instead on the more aspirational legislation that has been introduced and not acted on. If we want to protect our Great Lakes in an age of rapidly accelerating climate change, small and incremental changes simply will not be enough. Michigan is home to 21% of the world’s fresh surface water, and we need to enact bold policies to address the major water issues facing our state.

“It’s time to do things differently,” said Sean McBrearty, Clean Water Action’s Michigan Legislative and Policy Director. He continued, “Every lawmaker tells their constituents that they care about safe drinking water. However, some act differently once they get to Lansing. That’s why this year we scored legislators based on whether or not they have championed our issues from the get-go by sponsoring and co-sponsoring good legislation. We also took into account public statements legislators have made in support of shutting down the most imminent threat to the Great Lakes: Enbridge’s Line 5 oil pipeline.”

Sierra Club and Clean Water Action assert that corporate money flowing into Lansing for decades has hampered democratic processes and environmental protections. “There is a direct correlation between corporate attacks on our democracy, and rollbacks of basic drinking water protections. For example, the Enbridge oil company made a direct contribution of $126,650 to the Michigan Chamber of Commerce to fight redistricting reform in Michigan. Enbridge knows that if lawmakers have to answer to constituents instead of corporate lobbyists, then their dangerous Line 5 oil pipeline will be shut down.” said Christy McGillivray, Sierra Club’s
Legislative and Political Director. Speaking to the pro-democracy reform measures like same day voter registration and no reason absentee voting that passed in 2018, she concluded, “Sierra Club members overwhelmingly voted to take back our democracy, our voices should matter more than dirty corporate money.”

The joint scorecard gives only three scores: positive, neutral, and negative. There are a series of bills that are described in the scorecard, and legislators’ positions are outlined for constituents. To lift up the real environmental champions and draw attention to the corporate influence in Lansing, there is also a section describing the environmental heroes and villains in Lansing. The champions are leaders who have consistently introduced strong legislation and fight hard in Lansing and in their districts for the strongest possible environmental protections. They are Representatives Rabhi, Pohutsky, Koleszar, Hammoud, and Hood; and Senators Irwin, Chang, and Bayer. The villains are the leaders who stonewall any movement on basic protections for safe water, renewable energy, and clean air, and they include the monied interests that are sacrificing the health of Michiganders and the Great Lakes in favor of corporate profits. They are Senate Majority Leader Shirkey, House Majority Leader Chatfield, Enbridge Energy, the Michigan Chamber of Commerce, and DTE Energy.

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The Sierra Club is America’s largest and most influential grassroots environmental organization, with more than 4 million members and supporters nationwide and over 150,000 in Michigan. In addition to protecting every person’s right to get outdoors and access the healing power of nature, the Sierra Club works to promote clean energy, safeguard the health of our communities, protect wildlife, and preserve our remaining wild places through grassroots activism, public education, lobbying, and legal action. For more information, visit www.sierraclub.org/Michigan.

Since our founding during the campaign to pass the landmark Clean Water Act in 1972, Clean Water Action has worked to win strong health and environmental protections by bringing issue expertise, solution-oriented thinking and people power to the table. Clean Water Action is Michigan’s largest grassroots conservation group with over 250,000 members across the state. Through direct advocacy and education we organize Michigan residents to protect the Great Lakes and our water resources. Learn more at www.cleanwateraction.org/mi