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## **Environmental groups: Democrats cannot squander the moment**

*Lawmakers can lift the Great Lake State's waters out of dire straits*

For 22 months, lawmakers across the state have put forth and fought for bills to protect and improve Michigan's waters. Now, at the tail-end of their 'lame duck' session, lawmakers are setting aside this legislation for pro-pollution, corporate-influenced policies.

There are just days left to act before a new Michigan Legislature is sworn in, and Democratic leadership can use these final moments to protect the Great Lakes State's namesake, said a coalition of X environmental organizations.

The group issued the following statement:

*There have been few moments this century as dire as the one Michigan's water now faces in the final days of its lame duck session. Next year, a new state legislature will be gridlocked by split chambers. An incoming federal administration will be bent on rolling back cornerstone environmental protections. And it all comes as the extent and effects of pollutants—PFAS and microplastics and human waste—become fully, terribly known.*

*Michigan has the solutions its waters and its people need. Democrats in power have created the legislation to restore critical rules, create safety standards and provide affordable, clean water. But instead, they are squandering the moment. They're more focused on bowing down to corporate interests than they are passing strong, necessary water protections. They are voting on bills that allow industry to continue decimating our most beloved resource.*

*Now, with just days of legislating left before slates are cleaned and powers shift, our elected officials can do what they know is right. They can give people what they want and what they will most benefit from. They can thaw frozen water rules. They can keep chemicals and waste out of lakes and streams. They can help people get access to clean, affordable drinking water.*

*Governments across the nation and the world used to turn to Michigan to see how we protected water. Lawmakers cannot leave the Great Lakes State high and dry.*

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The coalition went on to outline the three sets of legislation imperative to the health of Michigan's waters and its people.

**Water protection restoration**, made possible through [Senate Bill 663](#) by Sen. Sue Shink (D-Ann Arbor) and [House Bill 5205](#) by Rep. Emily Dievendorf (D-Lansing). The legislation would thaw an 18-year freeze of Michigan's water protection laws that has prevented the state from making a wide range of updates, from adding PFAS to a list of dangerous chemicals to upgrading beach closure alert technology.

**Septic cleanup plan**, created through House Bills [4479](#) and [4480](#) and sponsored by Rep. Phil Skaggs (D-East Grand Rapids). The legislation would make Michigan the 50th state to create a septic code for managing Michigan's 1.4 million septic systems, a quarter of which leak billions of tons of fecal matter into the ground and water each year.

Senate Bills [299](#) and [300](#), sponsored by Sen. Sam Singh (D-Lansing) would have created a similar system but were watered down by local governments and health departments, despite clear evidence bold action is needed at the local level.

**Water affordability assistance**, created through Senate Bills [549](#), [550](#), [551](#), [552](#), [553](#), [554](#) and [980](#) and sponsored by a host of Senators. The legislation would limit cap water bills for low-income residents, prevent water shutoffs and provide renter water rights, all funded by an up to \$2 meter charge on all households.

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The coalition also outlined the sorts of corporate-influenced legislation elected officials are instead pushing for.

**Data center subsidies**, sponsored by Reps. [Alabas Farhat](#) (D-Dearborn) and [Joey Andrews](#) (D-St. Joseph) and Sens. [Kevin Hertel](#) (D-St. Clair Shores) and [Roger Victory](#) (R-Hudsonville). The legislation gives massive tax and utility bill breaks to corporations that use enormous amounts of water and energy. The result: insufficient jobs, poor environmental protections and ratepayer hikes.

**Underground CO2 storage**, allowed by Senate Bills [1131](#), [1132](#) and [1133](#) by Sens. Sean McCann (D-Kalamazoo), Joseph Bellino (R-Monroe) and John Cherry (D-Flint) respectively. The bills would let corporations store the CO2 they and other industries emit underground without key protections against leaks. Without those safeguards, our drinking water and communities would be at risk, much like those in [Illinois](#).

**A bad 'Bottle Bill'**, created through Senate Bills [1112](#) and [1113](#) and sponsored by Sen. McCann. The legislation would expand Michigan's beloved bottle deposit system at the expense of the

people who have powered it for nearly 50 years. The bills would redirect profits from unclaimed bottle deposit away from water cleanups and towards the companies already profiting from such a system.

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