

Summer 2026 • The Clean Water Action Newsletter

560,000+ Petition Signatures from Michiganders Who Want Money Out of Politics

On May 27th, the Michiganders for Money out of Politics (MMOP) campaign turned in more than 560,000 signatures for a November ballot proposal. MMOP would ban political donations from monopoly utilities and large government contractors and close a dark money loophole by requiring disclosure on political advertisements.

Clean Water Action has prioritized this fight because these corporations have an outsized influence on our state and our democracy. From constant rate hikes, to blocking legislation like polluter pay and community solar, to pushing through tax breaks for data centers — the money they spend on our lawmakers pays dividends, and Michigan suffers for it.

With our coalition partners, we were able to recruit thousands of volunteers all across the state collecting signatures in every Michigan county. Clean Water Action led the way with both the highest percentage of valid signatures and the highest total signatures collected by East Lansing canvasser Jacob Frazier. To our volunteers, petition signers, and donors: THANK YOU! We couldn't have done this without your support. Watch the turn-in rally and news conference at mopupmichigan.org/TurnIn.

We're asking for change because we deserve better from our elected officials — 80 percent of whom accepted political spending from utilities. Our lawmakers in Lansing should represent the people, not corporations.



▲ Michiganders for Money Out of Politics Volunteers from around the state and Clean Water staff came together to deliver 222 boxes of signed petitions to the Board of State Canvassers and hold a press conference in Lansing on May 27.

Our fight is just getting started. To keep big corporations like DTE, Consumers Energy, and Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan from buying influence in Lansing, we'll need support from Michiganders like you. We fully expect these corporations to fight accountability every step of the way — and we're prepared to fight back. They have their money, but we have our power. Sign up to get updates and ways you can help at mopupmichigan.org/updates, and support our grassroots organizing that makes this movement possible at cleanwater.org/MI/donate!

Defending Against Data Centers

Like many states, Michigan is experiencing a surge in proposed data center developments, despite the protests of local residents all across the state who have good reason to be skeptical. Big utilities and the tech industry are pushing speedy approvals through local governments with limited opportunities for public input. This is leaving many across the state feeling like their very real concerns about water, energy usage, noise, air pollution, and more are simply not being heard.

Data centers are being forced through despite opposition because in 2024, **DTE and Consumers Energy specifically lobbied for huge data center tax breaks to access a loophole that they made sure was included in our clean energy laws.**

Data centers consistently promise economic development opportunities that don't materialize. While there may be temporary job gains during construction, data centers have historically only created a few low wage jobs in the long term, while communities pay the price in higher energy bills and threats to water quality.

The supposed agreements to ensure that ratepayers don't pay more due to data center development are not enforceable. Data centers moving into Michigan will drastically increase the baseload need on our already-strained and outdated grid, while we get nothing in return.

More than 30 data center developments have been proposed in Michigan, including larger "hyperscale" data centers such as the 1.4 Gigawatt Saline Twp Oracle-Open AI project backed by DTE, which will require filling in wetlands to build and 10,000-20,000 gallons of water a day to operate. A May 2026 poll found that **77% of Michigan residents support regulations requiring more transparency from data center projects.** We need to pause this data center frenzy before more damage is done.

We have the right to be informed and to provide input on whether these massive data centers are constructed in our communities. It's time to put on the brakes on this data center boom and make sure that proper consideration is taking place, including full environmental impacts and long-term implications.



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That's why Clean Water Action is supporting the "Data Center Regulation Act", a bipartisan package of bills (HB 5594-559, SB 1018-1020), that would stop construction on any new data centers in Michigan until April 2027. **Send a message to your lawmakers in support of this legislation at cleanwater.org/midatacenters.**

While we push for this moratorium, we're also working to ensure that the best possible protections for our water and our energy prices are passed, as well as working with local communities to fight proposals being pushed through. Keep an eye on our [website](#) to follow our work on this important issue!

Changing of the Guard. This May we said farewell to our Michigan State Director, Sean McBrearty. Sean originally started at Clean Water Action as a field canvasser, and his leadership was instrumental in leading the recent Michiganders For Money Out Of Politics ballot initiative, acting as coordinator of the Oil & Water Don't Mix Coalition to shut down Line 5, and so much more. We wish Sean well at his new position at Industrious Labs, and welcome Emily Woodcock as our Interim Michigan State Director!

Millions of Gallons of Wastewater Into Lake Michigan: Stopping the Line 5 Tunnel

The proposed Line 5 tunnel in Michigan is being sold as a reasonable replacement to the dangerous and aging twin pipelines running between Lakes Michigan and Huron in the Straits of Mackinac. But for Michigan's waters and the life that relies on them, the tunnel construction itself would be catastrophic.

Over the past months, there have been several opportunities for public input through the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE). Nearly 100,000 Michiganders have submitted comments against the proposed tunnel, and on June 18th, EGLE held a virtual public meeting where the majority of speakers demonstrated opposition to the Line 5 tunnel and wastewater permit. Several Clean Water Action staff and members spoke up at this meeting, including our Michigan Water Justice Manager, Dr. Nichole Keway Biber. The following is Dr. Biber's testimony.

Because of the proposed discharge volume, duration, pollutant and treatment uncertainty, receiving-water sensitivity and cumulative impacts, the public-interest means that EGLE cannot legally authorize a NPDES permit for this proposed tunnel project. That sentence may become familiar, as the OWDM coalition has worked to provide guidance on effective public comments.

Masses of people are rightly horrified by the ongoing threat of Line 5 and by the further degradation the proposed Tunnel would inflict on our shared waters. Together we strive to counteract the massive amounts of money Enbridge deploys to disperse propaganda, bribe local municipalities, and buy influence with politicians.

The overall piecemeal permitting process allows Enbridge to set the terms with permit language that determines what EGLE can actually consider. This favors the unproven reassurances and cherry-picked data of the profit-motivated corporation while conveniently leaving out the big picture cumulative impacts of the entirety of Line 5's 645 mile long, 73-year-old menace and experimental Tunnel mess.

Nevertheless, EGLE is granted the authority to make decisions based on real-world science, not based on pinky promises and convenient narratives elevated by financially vested parties. Importantly, what this "best foot forward" wastewater permit does admit to

is already egregious and damaging enough to legally empower EGLE to use your authority to deny this permit.

Millions of gallons a day of industrial construction wastewater going into Lake Michigan, each day of a projected 6 year project. The actual composition of the wastewater is replete with unknowns, and

thereby of unknown impact on already suffering ecologies. Meanwhile the estimated 85-degree temperature of the discharge waters will absolutely be harmful to aquatic life particularly accustomed to the freshwaters of the Great Lakes.

How much more are water and wildlife expected to take? Whitefish populations have plummeted, my tribe and others are trying to preserve those lives of deep importance to our cultural responsibilities. Further spoiling these waters completely

undermines the restorative vision and actions necessary to truly secure the future of all Michigan's people and waters and wildlife. That must be deemed impermissible, at long last, unless the public trust is to be rendered meaningless. Our children deserve to inherit the wonders and joys of a thriving world shared with more-than-human relatives, not a wasteland of polluted, heated waters and deadzoned industrial sites.

Deny this wastewater permit, and together we can demand a clean water future.



▲ *Advocates from MI communities, tribal nations, and organizations at a press event in March for Michigan Supreme Court hearings against the Michigan Public Service Commission's approval of Enbridge's Line 5 tunnel.*

NATIONAL UPDATES

EPA Proposes to Roll Back PFAS Drinking Water Protections

In 2024, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) finalized the nation's first drinking water standards for six toxic PFAS "forever chemicals," a major victory for public health after years of advocacy. Now, the Trump administration is proposing to rescind protections for PFHxS, PFNA, GenX chemicals, and PFAS mixtures while also creating a pathway for some water systems to delay compliance with the remaining PFOA and PFOS standards until 2031. PFAS contamination has been found in drinking water sources across the country and exposure to these chemicals has been linked to cancer, immune system suppression, developmental harms, and other serious health effects.

Clean Water Action strongly opposes these rollbacks. Communities should not be forced to wait longer for protection from toxic chemicals in their drinking water. Instead of weakening safeguards, EPA should accelerate efforts to prevent PFAS pollution at its source, hold polluters accountable, and strengthen protections for public health. During the public comment period, Clean Water Action is mobilizing members and allies to urge EPA to reject these proposals and maintain strong federal drinking water standards for PFAS. [Take action today](#) before the comment period closes July 20, 2026.

Honoring Excellence in Lead Pipe Replacement

On June 23rd, the Lead Service Line Replacement Collaborative recognized 16 people and programs leading the charge to remove lead from the nation's drinking water systems. During the recognition ceremony, Lynn Thorp, President of Clean Water Action and Lead Services Line Replacement Collaborative Steering Committee member, presented the block of awards related to excellence in community engagement, ensuring equal access to replacement, promoting public health protection, and other aspects of program design that reflect a collaborative approach to getting the job done. Read more [here](#).



Our National Campaigns Team is excited to welcome two fellows for the summer from the Yale Environmental Fellows Program and the Yale Conservation Scholars-Early Leadership Initiative: **Jagur Parks** and **Brandi Williams**. As part of their first week, they had the opportunity to visit Climate Action Campaign's unique pop-up, the Museum of Unnatural Disasters. This moving exhibit highlighted how extreme climate events are affecting us all through artifacts and survivor stories.



EPA's Latest Giveaway to the Coal Industry

Clean Water Action has worked on securing stronger wastewater limits for coal plants for more than 13 years. In 2024, EPA finalized long-overdue protections to help control the hundreds of millions of pounds of toxic pollution being released by coal plants each year. Yet, in December 2025, EPA extended compliance deadlines by up to five years, prolonging the release of dangerous pollutants into our waterways. Now, in a second giveaway to the coal industry, EPA is proposing to weaken federal wastewater standards at up to 113 coal plants across the country. The proposed rule would threaten drinking water, damage critical ecosystems, and put the health of communities across the country at risk.

During the comment period, we spoke out at meetings with EPA, mobilized thousands of comments urging EPA to withdraw its plans, and coordinated a [community comment letter](#) with nearly 65 national, state, and local organizations opposing the rule. Thank you for helping us push back against EPA's latest giveaway to the coal industry.

Juneteenth and Environmental Justice: Juneteenth is a celebration of liberation, resilience, and the ongoing struggle to ensure that the promise of freedom is realized for everyone. As part of our efforts commemorating this important day, we're proud to highlight the environmental justice work happening across Clean Water Action. Read about it in [our latest blog](#).



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