

**Opening Statement of the Honorable Fred Upton
Subcommittee on Environment and the Economy
Hearing on “H.R. 212, the Drinking Water Protection Act”
February 5, 2015**

(As Prepared for Delivery)

Today, we gather to discuss H.R. 212, Mr. Latta’s bipartisan Drinking Water Protection Act. Following the hearing we’ll proceed right to a subcommittee markup, and I thank all the members for their participation as we close out this week’s work.

The whole nation was watching last summer when folks in Northwest Ohio were cautioned to avoid drinking their tap water due to the algal bloom in Lake Erie. The experience raised more questions than it answered:

- Which algae strains produce toxins that we need to worry about?
- How do we detect and measure those toxins?
- What steps can we take to protect the public?

As someone who represents a big chunk of Michigan coastline, I have long been a champion of all issues related to our Great Lakes and protecting those who live around them. This bill will give the EPA the tools they need to prevent future occurrences like the one that happened in Ohio.

Tackling this problem requires collaboration among EPA, the states, and Congress. That’s what today’s hearing is all about. Our first witness, EPA’s Peter Gravatt, has been working with us since last fall on this complex issue. Thank you, Peter, for meeting with us, and for testifying before this subcommittee twice within three months on the algal toxin problem for drinking water. We appreciate your hard work, and we have confidence in your ability to help solve this.

That’s why this bill doesn’t tell EPA what plays to call, or even when to call them, it merely asks EPA to put together a game plan for tackling the issue.

In addition to collaboration, success will require the persistence of all of us, and maybe some patience. We can’t wave a magic wand and make the algal toxin issue go away, but we can help EPA develop a plan to manage the problem. Let’s get going.

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