

Attorney General Granholm Unfairly Playing Politics With Current Environmental Permitting Process, Says Michigan Chamber of Commerce

Attorney General Jennifer Granholm, a 2002 gubernatorial candidate, is unfairly playing politics with the current environmental permitting process by concluding that the Perrier water bottling plant constitutes a water diversion, says the Michigan Chamber of Commerce.

(Photo: <http://www.newscom.com/cgi-bin/prnh/20000320/DEM039>)

"While Attorney General Granholm's letters to legislators and the Governor are not a formal opinion, the AG's radical decision on water diversion clearly places many Michigan businesses at a competitive disadvantage," says Kevin Korpi, Director of Environmental & Regulatory Affairs for the Michigan Chamber. "If Ms. Granholm's interpretation were to become law, nearly all consumptive water uses in Michigan could be considered a 'diversion or export' of water. The result would produce an unworkable regulatory process and have dire consequences on a number of producers and manufacturers that use large amounts of water within the State of Michigan."

"Electric generators, most manufacturers, bottlers, breweries, fruit growers, and agricultural commodity producers all consume large amounts of water within the Great Lakes Basin without violating federal law," Korpi added.

The Perrier water bottling plant project -- located in Mecosta County -- has completed scientific environmental assessments, and after a careful review, received the necessary permits from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality to withdraw groundwater for the purpose of bottling and consumption.

"The Great Spring Waters of America Project (Perrier) has an excellent environmental track record and does not involve a bulk export of water to foreign countries or to other parts of this country," Korpi noted.

Michigan Chamber President & CEO Jim Barrett said: "The State's business climate depends, in part, on certainty in regulatory decisions based on sound science. Unfortunately, the Attorney General's view would turn water use regulation upside down and hand it over to the federal government. The Michigan Chamber supports the current rigorous standards of the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality for consumptive groundwater usage, which Perrier has met."

"Politics and emotions make for poor environmental policy. It is unfair to ignore science-based standards, which could result in the reversal of already permitted decisions," Barrett added.

The proposed Annex 2001 -- offered by the Great Lakes Council of Governors -- and related potential legislation may, if enacted, cover groundwater and consumptive uses in the basin in the future, Korpi noted. "It is in this context that the Michigan Chamber would support a reasonable definition of a water diversion and appropriate water use regulations that are protective of the Great Lakes and its water dependent resources," Korpi concluded.

The Michigan Chamber of Commerce is a statewide business organization that represents approximately 7,000 employers, trade associations and local chambers of commerce. The Michigan Chamber was established in 1959 to be an advocate for Michigan job providers in the legislative, political and legal process.

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