

VOTING:

Learn about the candidates on your ballot

Elected officials set priorities that can lead to better protections for the lakes, or leave our waters more vulnerable to pollution. They oversee agencies that implement clean water laws and regulations. And they make budget decisions that impact the Great Lakes, drinking water, stormwater, and sewage programs.

Learn which offices are up for election. The list of local elected offices sometimes seems incomprehensible. But understanding local offices and their role(s) can help you make informed choices on issues you care about. For instance, a city comptroller is essentially the city's chief financial officer and can have major influence over how local governments spend taxpayer dollars. Knowing the role(s) elected officials play can help you ask informed questions. You can learn which elected offices will appear on your ballot by visiting our Great Lakes Voter Information Center at greatlakes.org/VoterInfo.

Learn where candidates stand on Great Lakes and water infrastructure issues. After you have identified the issue you care about and the candidates who are seeking offices that influence that issue, find out what they would do if elected. For instance, if you are concerned about rising water and sewer bills, your local water and sewer district sets the rates, but your mayor or city council may have influence over those decisions.

Here are some ways you can learn about candidates' stances on Great Lakes and clean water issues:

- **Read answers to a nonpartisan candidate questionnaire.** Local news outlets and nonpartisan organizations sometimes create questionnaires where candidates can provide their views on important issues. Check your local newspaper or television station's website to see if the outlet has a nonpartisan candidate questionnaire.
- **Attend a nonpartisan candidate forum.** Watching a candidate debate, town hall, or other forum can be a great way to learn what candidates would do if elected. Check with groups like local media outlets, civic organizations, and chambers of commerce that regularly organize these events. Follow these groups on social media or sign up for their email lists to receive announcements about upcoming candidate forums, or get links to recordings of past forums.
- **Visit candidates' websites.** Many candidates publish issue positions on their websites. Look for website sections about environmental issues, water and sewer infrastructure, or local budgeting and permitting decisions.
- **Ask candidates directly.** If you can't find answers another way, try asking your questions through the contact form on the candidates' websites, by tagging them on social media, or by speaking with them at in-person events. Tell them why the issue is important to you. Let them know that you live in their district and you couldn't find the answer on their websites. Make sure to ask your questions respectfully, regardless of how you feel about any candidates' political affiliation or their stances on other issues.

