



**Tom Barrett**  
Mayor, City of Milwaukee

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September 19, 2008

U.S. Representative Mark Kirk  
Washington, DC Office  
1030 Longworth HOB  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Kirk:

I understand from news reports that the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago recently released the largest combined sewer overflow into Lake Michigan ever recorded.

While no one wants to see sewage overflows occur at all, there are times when the sewers are overwhelmed and it is necessary to have overflow into waterways to prevent sewage backups into homes and businesses. This was likely the case during recent heavy rainstorms in the Chicagoland area earlier this month.

What concerns me is the amount of the overflows reported by the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago which were estimated at 99 billion gallons. To provide some comparison, the Metropolitan Milwaukee Sewerage District (MMSD) overflows since 1994 when our deep tunnel went online is 18.7 billion gallons. The Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago estimates do not even include the amount (1.8 billion gallons) of sewage released to the Illinois and Mississippi Rivers during the same storm.

So, in this one September storm alone, Chicago released *five times* more combined sewage than Milwaukee has released in 14 years.

Additionally, Chicago is perhaps the only community that can have overflows that go both east and west into different watersheds (Lake Michigan and the Mississippi River) at the same time. Chicago has dozens of combined sewer overflows every year into the Mississippi basin – the source of drinking water for millions of people. Chicago is also the only city on the Great Lakes that does not disinfect its wastewater.

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Without question, both Milwaukee and Chicago have a very strong commitment to protecting Lake Michigan. As government officials, our respective citizens expect us to do everything we can to ensure this precious resource is healthy for generations to come.

I believe we can get more accomplished if we work together. Everyone on the Great Lakes needs to do better to reduce pollution. We have a common problem that will take an enormous amount of resources to address. It is my hope that we can join forces to attract the resources so desperately needed to revitalize the Great Lakes.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Barrett". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "T".

Mayor Tom Barrett