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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### ***ACLU of Wisconsin Calls on Congressman Sensenbrenner to Protect Scientific Inquiry and Public Health of Great Lakes Basin Residents***

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
February 18, 2008

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MILWAUKEE, WI -- Today, the American Civil Liberties Union of Wisconsin called on Congressman F. James Sensenbrenner to use his influence to protect scientific inquiry and the public health. Sensenbrenner serves on the House Committee on Science and Technology which is reviewing allegations that the administration has suppressed publication of a scientific report regarding health conditions and environmental pollution in the Great Lakes Basin.

An article Monday, in the online version of The Washington Post entitled "Delay of Report is Blamed on Politics" says that, "The lead author and peer reviewers of a government report raising the possibility of public health threats from industrial contamination throughout the Great Lakes region are charging that the report is being suppressed because of the questions it raises."

Since 2002 scientists at the federal Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATDRS) have been preparing a study entitled: "Public Health Implications of Hazardous Substances in the Twenty-six U.S. Great Lakes Areas of Concern." As of today the agency has not released it. Among the areas of concern included in the study are the Milwaukee Estuary, the Sheboygan River, and Lower Green Bay and the Fox River.

In a letter emailed to Congressman Sensenbrenner, the Chris Ahmuty, executive director of the ACLU of Wisconsin, wrote that this controversy, "relates significantly to civil liberties because it appears to be another instance where the administration has muzzled government scientists for no apparent scientific reason." Ahmuty wrote that Sensenbrenner's "influence is particularly important because of the administration's record of suppressing and distorting environmental and public health information."

Ahmuty also said today, “The areas of concern under study include Wisconsin communities where people of color and low income live. Congressman Sensenbrenner needs to protect the health of these people from the administration’s interference in scientific inquiry.” Ahmuty concluded, “I believe that the congressman and the ACLU agree that governmental accountability at least to the Congress is essential. Hopefully, the ATDRS will be forthcoming in its respond to the Congress’s requests.”

The American Civil Liberties Union is a membership organization dedicated to defending the civil liberties and rights of all Wisconsin residents in a nonpartisan manner. See [www.aclu-wi.org](http://www.aclu-wi.org)