



The “*Lake Champlain Basin Program Reauthorization Act of 2024*”

U.S. Senator Peter Welch

BACKGROUND

Nestled between the Green Mountains and Adirondacks, the Lake Champlain basin watershed covers more than 8,000 square miles. Fed by snowmelt and a network of rivers and streams, the lake itself runs 120 miles between Vermont and New York northwards into Quebec Province, Canada. More than 600,000 people call the Lake Champlain watershed home; millions more visit the region each year to enjoy its natural beauty, outdoor recreation, and history—from shipwrecks to Revolutionary War-era forts, abundant wildlife habitat to aquatic ecosystems, and fertile agricultural lands to rugged mountain terrain.

Since 1992, the Patrick Leahy Lake Champlain Basin Program (LCBP) has protected the lake’s ecosystems and fostered thriving communities within the basin. LCBP brings together an international coalition of stakeholders to benefit the Lake’s water quality, fisheries, wetlands, wildlife, recreation, and cultural resources. Guided by the Program’s interstate management plan, LCBP also works to mitigate invasive species, reduce nutrient and toxic substances pollution, address conservation needs, and promote public education and engagement around these topics. Throughout its history, the Program has received bipartisan support from both sides of the Lake and, in 2022, was renamed after former Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT).

LEGISLATION

The *Lake Champlain Basin Program Reauthorization Act of 2024* would increase funding for the Program and authorize its activities for 10 years. Specifically, this legislation would:

- Create the Patrick Leahy Lake Champlain Basin Program Foundation to administer the Program’s funding and implement the pollution prevention, ecosystem protection and restoration, and climate change response plan.
- Authorize \$55 million for LCBP funding annually through 2034, an increase of \$20 million compared to current program levels.
- Clarify the relationship between LCBP and the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, allowing for greater support for the Lake and collaboration between Federal, State and local, and non-governmental partners.
- Make LCBP grants through the Environmental Protection Agency more accessible for local communities by lowering the non-Federal cost-share for such grants on a case-by-case basis.

- Improve the organization of LCBP by affording greater administrative flexibility for a growing program and codifying the structure of key LCBP committees.

The *Lake Champlain Basin Program Reauthorization Act* is led by Senator Peter Welch (D-VT) and cosponsored by Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), Senator Bernie Sanders (D-VT), and Senate Majority Leader Charles Schumer (D-NY). Representative Becca Balint (D-VT-AL) introduced companion legislation in the House.