**BAO Report**

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**Before the Guests Arrive**

**It’s great that Cleveland will host the 2016 Republican convention, but northern Ohio needs to spruce up first**

Editorial, The Blade

Gov. John Kasich wants his fellow Republicans from across the country to tour Lake Erie when they come to Cleveland for the GOP’s national convention in two years. That gives the governor time to help clean up the living room before the company gets here, if he is so inclined.

Mr. Kasich led this week’s observance of Fish Ohio Day, celebrating Lake Erie’s natural beauty and economic contributions to our state. He signed an important agreement that commits Ohio to working with neighboring states and Canadian provinces to keep invasive species, notably Asian carp, out of the Great Lakes.

More ominously, though, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Organization warned Thursday that western Lake Erie will endure “significant” blooms of toxic algae this summer, albeit not as bad as last year’s blooms or the record outbreak of 2011. The blue-green slime is a menace — and has been for two decades — to public health, drinking water supplies, shoreline property values, and the tourism, fishing, boating, and recreational industries that depend on a clean, healthy, attractive lake.

The better news is that a new law, cosponsored by Sen. Rob Portman (R., Ohio), extends federal funding of programs that study and aim to control toxic algae. Mr. Portman, who took part in this week’s fishing festivities, says he expects the legislation to make a major contribution to cleaning up the freshwater Great Lakes, especially Lake Erie. Now Congress must ensure that the money is included in the budget.

Since phosphorous runoff from fertilizers is largely responsible for the algae blooms, Ohio farmers and other private actors also must participate in the search for solutions to Lake Erie’s toxic algae. It’s gratifying that they are stepping up.

At the same time, new state legislation earmarks $10 million for efforts to improve water quality in western Lake Erie. A recent agreement between the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers could curb the noxious practice of dumping phosphorus-loaded sediment that the corps dredges from the Toledo shipping channel into Maumee Bay.

All these initiatives are promising, but much more remains to be done. If Governor Kasich wants to burnish his environmental credentials after his misguided support of a new law that guts Ohio’s clean-energy and energy-efficiency standards, enhanced leadership to protect Lake Erie would be a good way to do it.

Meanwhile, the GOP’s decision to hold its presidential nominating convention in Cleveland in 2016 offers appropriate recognition of our state’s central importance in national politics. It’s become almost an instant cliché to note that no Republican has ever won a presidential election without taking Ohio.

The Cleveland area plans to spend $60 million to host the convention, with the expectation that the event will generate three to five times as much local revenue, as well as positive publicity for the city. Toledo is not likely to realize tangible economic benefits from the event, but can share in a better image of the state that the convention creates.

Ohioans surely will want the 50,000 or so Republican convention delegates, party officials, journalists, and spectators to go home humming “Cleveland Rocks” instead of bemoaning the debased state of Lake Erie. So step up the cleanup.