Peter Welch
U.S. SENATOR FOR VERMONT

Lake Champlain Basin Program Enhancements Act of 2026

Led in the Senate by: Senators Peter Welch (D-Vt.); Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.); Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.); Kirsten Gillibrand (D-N.Y.)

Introduced in the House by: Rep. Elise Stefanik (R-NY-21); Becca Balint (D-VT-At-Large)

Background:

Nestled between the Green Mountains and Adirondacks, the Lake Champlain basin 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 basin 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 rural 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 bipartisan, bicameral *Lake Champlain Basin Program Enhancements Act of 2026* would strengthen local oversight of LCBP operations while reauthorizing the program through 2032. Specifically, the legislation would:

- Establish a process through which the EPA and the Lake Champlain Steering Committee may periodically evaluate the efficacy of LCBP's fiscal agent—the organization that helps manage LCBP finances and executes grant awards—and, if needed, select a new fiscal agent for the program.
- Reauthorize LCBP funding at $35 million annually through 2032.

- Formally authorize the partnership 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.