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**Statement from Representative Theodore Deutch (FL-19)**  
**On DEUTCH\_026 amendment to H.R. 2018**

Mr. Chairman.

My amendment would exempt the waters of the Everglades in the State of Florida from the provisions of H.R. 2018, the “Clean Water Cooperative Federalism Act of 2011.” By exempting the Everglades from the provisions of the Act, my amendment would preserve the delicate ecosystem of the Everglades; ensure that ongoing restoration efforts of the Everglades do not cause irreparable damage to fishing and wildlife in the area; and protect the public health of Floridians through continued access to safe drinking water.

The Florida Everglades is one of our Nation’s pristine parks made up of 1.5 million acres of a unique habitat and ecosystem. In fact, it is the third largest park in the continental United States. Not only is the Everglades an environmental treasure, but it also is a major tourist destination, which provides an important source of revenue for the State of Florida and local communities. Moreover, the Everglades is an essential source of drinking water for the State, providing 33% of Floridians with fresh drinking water.

With such a delicate ecosystem in our backyard, it is incumbent upon us to be vigilant and to take the necessary steps to protect this unique and valuable site. To date, several billions of dollars have been dedicated to restoring the Everglades. We simply cannot allow years of financial commitment and the countless hours that have been spent by dedicated people towards restoration efforts to go to waste. H.R. 2018 fails to protect the Everglades and, in fact, threatens

this most precious resource. The bill would impose severe limitations on the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) ability to enforce the Clean Water Act. Under the bill, states would continue to establish their own water quality and pollution standards. However, the EPA's role of revising outdated water quality standards would be prevented; the EPA would be limited in its ability to provide views on whether a proposed project causes pollution in violation of the Clean Water Act; the EPA would be prevented from taking action if projects approved by the Army Corps of Engineers could cause adverse impacts to water ways; and public comment participation would be severely limited which would prevent the EPA from providing constructive comments to the Corps of Engineers. By severely curtailing the role of the EPA in enforcing the Clean Water Act, H.R. 2018 hands over primary authority to the states to establish water quality and pollution standards. For the Everglades, such a framework would be devastating.

It has been well publicized lately that the Governor of Florida – Rick Scott – has taken unprecedented steps to freeze agency rule-making in the State. While the courts are currently determining whether the Governor has overstepped his authority under the state constitution, such actions by the Governor would be disastrous for the Everglades in the event Florida were given sole authority to implement water quality and pollution standards absent a coordinated role with the EPA. Indeed, it would not be outside the realm of possibility to envision a framework under H.R. 2018 in which the current rules on water quality and pollution for the Everglades are frozen in their current state and then dramatically rolled back. Rolling back crucial water quality and pollution standards would cause irreparable harm to the delicate ecosystem of the Everglades, cause significant harm to local economies that depend on fishing and tourism, and

threaten the safety of countless Floridians that depend on safe drinking water from the Everglades.

Additionally, H.R. 2018 would have a profound impact on ongoing Everglades restoration projects. This bill would upend the delicate cooperative framework that has been created in the Clean Water Act between the EPA, the Army Corps of Engineers, and the states. While the Corps of Engineers has already done and continues to do an admirable job on Everglades restoration projects, the EPA is in a position to provide crucial environmental expertise on potential impacts that restoration projects can have on water quality and pollution standards in the Everglades. H.R. 2018 would severely hinder EPA's ability to provide these important, constructive comments to the Corps on restoration projects for the Everglades.

It is critical that we continue moving forward in protecting and preserving one of the most unique habitats and ecosystems in the world - the Everglades. H.R. 2018 would be a giant leap backward in Everglades protection and would threaten its existence for future generations. My amendment would, therefore, exempt the Everglades from the dangerous provisions of this bill. I urge its adoption.