



July 31, 2017

The Honorable Ryan Zinke  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20240

The Honorable Sonny Perdue  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Ave S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Zinke and Secretary Perdue:

On June 30th of this year you received a bipartisan letter from 26 members of Congress related to mineral development issues in northern Minnesota. As elected leaders of the Minnesota Legislature, we are writing to add our support for that letter.

As we stated in our own correspondence earlier this year (attached), we are outraged at the decision made by the previous administration to withdraw nearly 240,000 acres of federal lands from future mineral exploration and development as well as the denial of federal mineral leases held by Twin Metals Minnesota. These decisions will yield immense negative impacts our region, harming a wide array of technology, infrastructure and manufacturing industries, especially the rapidly growing green and renewable energy sectors.

The expansion of the precious metals mining industry offers generations of Minnesotans thousands of good-paying jobs, billions of dollars in investment, and billions more in revenues to Minnesota schools. It is also an incredible opportunity to further establish our nation's economic and energy independence from the foreign mineral sources we now depend on. Removing vast amounts of federal land from potential development and blocking the renewal of Twin Metals' federal mineral leases was a mistake, and we ask that these decisions be reversed immediately.

Sincerely,

Kurt Daudt  
Speaker of the House  
Minnesota House of Representatives

Paul Gazelka  
Senate Majority Leader  
Minnesota State Senate

Tom Bakk  
Senate Minority Leader  
Minnesota State Senate



January 11, 2017

Secretary Sally Jewell  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street N.W.  
Washington DC 20240

Secretary Tom Vilsack  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Ave. S.W.  
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack and Secretary Jewell:

As elected leaders of the Minnesota Legislature, we are writing to express our outrage at the recent politically-driven decisions issued by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) related to mineral development in Northeast Minnesota. Initiating actions to withdraw nearly 240,000 acres of federal lands and minerals from future exploration and potential development and denying the renewal of 50-year federal mineral leases held by Twin Metals Minnesota are onerous decisions that will cause devastating and irreversible damage to the citizens, communities and economy of the region. We seek your immediate reconsideration and reversal of these actions, and urge you to refocus your agencies on the proper tasks of accepting and assessing mining project proposals under the regulatory procedures established by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other related federal statutes.

Prohibiting future mineral exploration and development over 240,000 additional acres of federal lands will have sweeping negative impacts for the not just the precious metals industry, but the entire region of Northeast Minnesota as well. Beyond any one particular project this action will harm a wide array of technology, infrastructure and manufacturing industries, especially the rapidly growing green and renewable energy sectors. Independent economic analysis from the University of Minnesota-Duluth estimates more than 12,000 construction jobs and 5,000 long-term mining jobs would be created if the projects currently under various stages of development in this region came to fruition. Even beyond those direct employment opportunities, research projects nearly a 3:1 ratio of supplemental jobs created. This would represent a significant beacon of hope for one of the most economically distressed regions in our nation. Further, the estimated four billion ton deposit of copper, nickel and other strategic minerals located within the Duluth Complex stand to potentially generate nearly \$3 billion in royalty revenues for the state's Permanent School Trust Fund – resources that would support the education of nearly 900,000 K-12 students statewide. These are the enormous economic opportunities and educational responsibilities that will be lost under your agencies' misguided and politically motivated anti-mining decisions.

We would also note that previous similar withdrawal proposals have been strongly opposed by U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar, U.S. Senator Al Franken, Minnesota 8<sup>th</sup> District Congressman Rick Nolan, the entire Minnesota Iron Range state legislative delegation, and the vast majority of county and local elected officials throughout the region. Recent public opinion surveys also show that two-thirds of citizens in the region oppose the withdrawal of federal minerals from future development, and more than 80 percent support environmentally-responsible mining in the region. Along with being onerous, unnecessary and contrary to previous Congressional directive, the withdrawal proposal is extraordinarily tone deaf to the opinions and economic needs of the citizens of Northeast Minnesota where mining has been the anchor of the region's economy since its inception in 1881.

In regards to the Twin Metals project specifically, rhetoric should not derail due process. The leases held by Twin Metals were issued in 1966 and have been held in good standing by the federal government for more than 50 years. The leases were renewed by BLM and USFS without controversy in 1989 and again in 2004, and Twin Metals has invested more than \$400 million in project development activities based on the federal government living up to its contractual obligations. The justification given by BLM and USFS for their unprecedented reversal of support for these leases is irrational and based on unfounded fears of hypothetical and generalized environmental impacts of mining in the region.

The potential – but unproven – environmental concerns raised by BLM and USFS related to future mining in the region are appropriately studied under NEPA's thorough, multi-agency, science-based Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process AFTER a specific mine project has been proposed – a step Twin Metals has yet to take. Fearful guessing about potential future environmental impacts of yet-to-be proposed mining projects is no substitute for the long-established federal and state EIS process. We urge you to reverse the decision to deny renewal of Twin Metals' leases, direct the agencies to renew the leases as they did in 1989 and 2004, and work with Twin Metals under the lease terms to assist in developing a formal mining proposal for proper environmental review.

The expansion of the precious metals mining industry offers generations of Minnesotans thousands of good-paying jobs, billions of dollars in investment, and billions more in revenues to Minnesota schools. It is also an incredible opportunity to further establish our nation's economic and energy independence from the foreign mineral sources we now depend on. Removing vast amounts of federal land from potential development and blocking the renewal of Twin Metals' federal mineral leases will have devastating impacts to the economic future of Northeast Minnesota, and would deny the United States economy responsible access to valuable national resources. These decisions should both be reversed immediately.

Sincerely,



Rep. Kurt Daudt  
Speaker of the House




Sen. Tom Bakk  
Minority Leader



Sen. Paul Gazelka  
Majority Leader



Rep. Joyce Peppin  
Majority Leader



Rep. Dan Fabian  
Environment Committee Chair



Rep. Chris Swedzinski  
Mining and Outdoor Recreation Chair



Sen. Bill Ingebrigtesen  
Environment Committee Chair




Sen. David Tomassoni  
Senate District 6



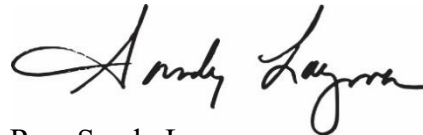
Rep. Mike Sundin  
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Rep. Rob Ecklund  
House District 3A



Rep. Jason Metsa  
House District 6B



Rep. Sandy Layman  
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Rep. Julie Sandstede  
House District 6A



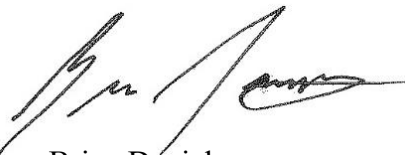
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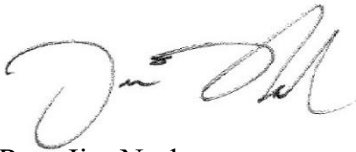
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House District 15A



Rep. Eric Lucero  
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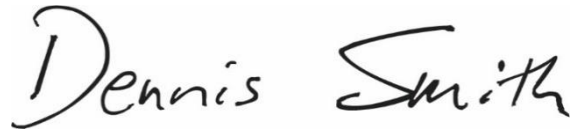
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Rep. Linda Runbeck  
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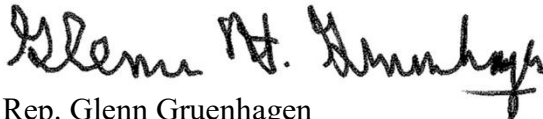
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Rep. Bob Loonan  
House District 55A



Rep. Paul Anderson  
House District 12B



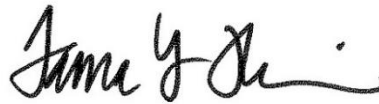
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House District 33B



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House District 39A



Sen. Mark Johnson  
Senate District 1



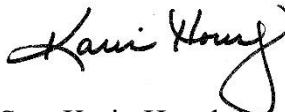
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Sen. Bruce Anderson  
Senate District 29



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