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September 10, 2024

Representative Bruce Westerman
House Committee on Natural Resources
202 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Chairman Westerman and Members of the House of Representatives:

I am writing today on behalf of Jobs for Minnesotans, a coalition co-founded by the Minnesota Building and Construction Trades Council and the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce and strengthened by labor unions, community leaders and business members from across the state. We represent 70,000 union workers, 6,300 companies and 500,000 employees in Minnesota.

Our coalition is in strong support for your legislation aimed at improving the permitting of projects under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). As a coalition, we have consistently advocated for a fair regulatory process – fair to the public, the government agencies and investors alike. The three pillars of a fair process include transparency, predictability and timeliness. Without any of these, the regulatory process loses credibility and fairness for projects being reviewed in our country.

This legislation strengthens the regulatory process and would have a positive impact on several major proposed copper-nickel mining projects in our region through improved transparency and efficiency in the federal permitting process.

The communities in northeast Minnesota stand to benefit from these projects through their ability to bring significant economic contributions and job opportunities to an area of Minnesota that has been on economic decline for decades. Yet, the companies proposing to responsibly bring these projects forward have faced a series of unnecessary setbacks and delays in the federal environmental review and permitting process.

The copper-nickel mining projects in our region are essential to the revitalization of our local communities and to ensuring we meet our nation's goals of bolstering domestic supplies of critical minerals.

In the last decade, since we've been advocating for federal agencies to uphold the regulatory process outlined in law, there has been very little accountability to encourage federal agencies to advance the review of a proposed mine plan in a timely and fair manner. Moreover, mining in our region has been used as a high-stakes political game with a mining moratorium and the unjustified pulling of minerals leases.

Permitting reform is needed to ensure these problems no longer persist, and to ensure proposed projects are reviewed in a coordinated and efficient manner while simultaneously ensuring our strong environmental standards are met. The review of these projects should be taken seriously and not used as a partisan political football where the advancement of the review only moves forward dependent on which party holds office. Our communities in northeast Minnesota deserve better. This legislation will help do just that.

JOBS FOR MINNESOTANS



jobsforminnesotans.org

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Therefore, we at Jobs for Minnesotans fully support your proposed NEPA reform legislation.

Sincerely,

David Chura
Board Chair
Jobs for Minnesotans
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Suite 1500
St. Paul, MN 55101

Jobs for Minnesotans, a coalition representing business, labor and communities, supports statewide opportunities for prosperity and middle-class jobs from sustainable natural resource development in Minnesota. The organization is committed to the principle that our state can preserve both job opportunities and the environment for future generations. Jobs for Minnesotans was co-founded in 2012 by the Minnesota Building and Construction Trades Council representing 70,000 workers and the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce representing 2,300 companies and 500,000 employees