

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-2308

The Honorable Deb Haaland
Secretary
Department of the Interior
1849 C St. NW
Washington, DC 20240

October 15, 2021

We are concerned about the Department of the Interior's intention to continue using northern Minnesota's mining communities and natural resources as a political football. As you may be aware, the Duluth Complex, located entirely in the 8th District in northern Minnesota, contains 95% of America's nickel, 88% of America's cobalt, and more than one-third of America's copper, among other significant mineral deposits.¹ Development of this spectacular resource is necessary not only for economic development, but for American national security, global emission goals, and for countless other applications.

Twin Metals Minnesota is a mining company in northern Minnesota seeking to develop a significant portion of the Duluth Complex. With the baseline certainty provided by the Trump Administration and the law, the company has since signed a project labor agreement with the Iron Range Building and Construction Trades, cementing its commitment to the community and a high-quality, union-protected workforce.²

The men and women from northern Minnesota are building on the region's rich mining legacy, where the 8th District has provided the iron ore that built and sustained America for the last 130 years. The local workforce's expertise and environmental stewardship are unmatched; it will build and operate a mine to fulfill our nation's growing hunger for copper, nickel, cobalt, and others, instead of importing these minerals from tenuous sources like the Congo who have insufficient environmental standards and where Chinese-controlled mines employ child slave labor. We hope we can agree that slave labor must be ended and not furthered by this administration's policies.

In 2016, with only days remaining in the Obama Administration, the Interior Department took the unwarranted, radical and unlawful step of cancelling leases held by Twin Metals Minnesota, who had a non-discretionary right to a third renewal.³ Besides currying favor with the radical, activist class, this action revealed the Obama Administration's disdain for working class Americans and threw northern Minnesotans' livelihoods and any possibility of natural resource independence into uncertainty.

¹ https://www.mesabitrribune.com/mine/minnesota-has-the-metals-for-ev-green-energy-economy/article_810ada2c-7646-11eb-bb2c-bb7589cbe044.html/

² <https://www.duluthnewstribune.com/business/energy-and-mining/4621343-Twin-Metals-says-it-will-use-union-labor-to-build-mine>

³ <https://www.blm.gov/press-release/obama-administration-takes-steps-protect-watershed-boundary-waters-canoe-area>

Fortunately, President Trump's Interior Department did the right thing by studying the issue, following the law, and reinstating the long-held leases.⁴

Twin Metals Minnesota has recently offered a mine plan of operation and is seeking to undergo our nation's (and the State of Minnesota's) rigorous permitting process. This mine can help satisfy the needs articulated in the White House's 100 Day Review titled "Building Resilient Supply Chains, Revitalizing American Manufacturing, and Fostering Broad-Based Growth."

Therefore, we respectfully request you answer the following questions regarding the leases held since 1966 by Twin Metals Minnesota:

Do you commit to following the law, affirmed by the courts, by leaving in place the leases held by Twin Metals Minnesota?

Will you meet with all stakeholders, including mining proponents, when considering action regarding Twin Metals Minnesota?

As a member of the House of Representatives, you cosponsored and voted in favor of H.R. 5598, a bill that arbitrarily withdraws more than 234,000 acres in the Superior National Forest and targets the Twin Metals project, during a September 30, 2020 markup. Are you able to withhold judgment on the project following this vote? We hope that in your new role, you will appreciate the difference between a messaging vote and the real consequences that administrative action will have to unnecessarily devastate the people of the 8th District of Minnesota, and the entirety of our nation.

We respectfully request the opportunity to meet with you to discuss the project in detail with you and dispel any of the misleading information that was represented in committee hearings. This is too important for us to leave to the half-truths and innuendos represented by the misinformed of Congress.

Please submit your responses in writing to Andrew.Morley@mail.house.gov and Ashley.Nichols@mail.house.gov. We look forward to hearing from you on behalf of the men and women of Minnesota's Eighth Congressional District.

Sincerely,



Pete Stauber
Member of Congress



Bruce Westerman
Member of Congress

⁴ <https://www.doi.gov/sites/doi.gov/files/uploads/m-37049.pdf>