

All 2012 caucuses: Please pass this resolution:

## **Sulfide Mining – Protect Minnesota’s Water & Natural Heritage**

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WHEREAS:

- Minnesota’s natural heritage requires protection of the Lake Superior Watershed, the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness and other treasured forest and wetland habitats in Northern Minnesota;
- Tens of thousands of Minnesotans’ existing and future jobs are dependent upon preserving Minnesota’s heritage of clean air, water and lands;
- The history of sulfide mining is one of environmental disaster, and there is no evidence that mining for copper, nickel, and other non-ferrous (non-iron) metals from sulfide rock in Northern Minnesota can be done without harming Minnesota's fresh water resources, fish, plants, wildlife and human health,

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that no sulfide mines shall be permitted if they threaten Minnesota’s water resources and natural heritage.**

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### **Why do we need to protect Minnesota’s natural heritage resources from sulfide mining?**

Minnesota has a unique opportunity to prevent the permanent, toxic damage to our **unique natural heritage** that has occurred EVERYWHERE ELSE sulfide metal mining has been done. Our Lake Superior Watershed, Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, wild rice, healthy fish and clean water are at risk from sulfide mining. There is no example in the world where sulfide mining has been done in a water-intense area without leaving a legacy of acidic and toxic water pollution and never ending clean-up costs for taxpayers.

**What about the economy?** Sulfide mining threatens tens of thousands of Minnesota jobs dependent on clean water, healthy fish, and natural heritage. New sulfide mining would add relatively few jobs to the job market, as mines have become highly automated. Mining is proposed by huge global companies that will export raw products and profits out of the country without any plans for value-added local industries (producing finished products).



### **Don’t we need new copper and other metals?**

Copper and other metals are important to the modern economy. But less than 10% of copper uses require virgin mined metal. Copper is one of the easiest metals to recycle. Currently, the U.S. only recycles about half of its copper scrap, while exporting the remainder, which is mostly post-consumer scrap. Recycling copper saves up to 90% of the energy used by mining and processing virgin ore.

### **How is sulfide mining different from iron mining that has been done in Minnesota for decades?**

Unlike most iron ore, the rock from which copper is mined has high levels of sulfide. Once the small fraction of metals is extracted, mountains of waste rock are left in stockpiles that create sulfuric acid when exposed to air and water, which leaches toxic metals into streams, rivers, lakes and drinking water.

## What sulfide mining projects have been proposed?

The PolyMet mine is the first proposed sulfide mine in Minnesota, with several more in exploration phases. PolyMet proposes an open-pit sulfide metal mine on 6,700 acres of wetlands and forests on public land in the Superior National Forest.

- **The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) gave a rare failing grade to PolyMet's Draft Environmental Impact Statement and said that** environmental impacts were so great that the EPA believed the mine and processing plan should not proceed as proposed.
- Sulfates, mercury, and other metals would leach from PolyMet tailings and waste rock into ground water and the Embarrass & Partridge Rivers. Pollution would reach the St. Louis River and Lake Superior, **increasing toxic mercury in fish, harming natural stands of wild rice and damaging the aquatic food chain.**
- The PolyMet mine pits would destroy thousands of acres of wetland habitats (the biggest loss in upper Midwest Region 5 history) and damage tribal resources.
- PolyMet is a foreign Canadian company heavily financed by multinational Glencore, the world's largest commodities trader, notorious for pollution, union-busting, mine accidents, and cut and run shutdowns in France, Zambia, and Columbia.

**Twin Metals Mining, a company sprung from an alliance between Duluth Metals and Chilean giant Antofagasta, is evaluating construction of an underground copper-nickel mine near Birch Lake, the South Kawishiwi River, and the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness.**

- **Twin Metals controls 25,000 acres and over one billion tons in combined copper-nickel deposits through this venture and owns another 31,000 nearby acres.**
- Project details are not yet known, but an underground mine would create huge surface tailings basins and waste rock piles as well as risking extensive groundwater pollution.

## We Can have Jobs and Clean Water

Northeastern Minnesota has experienced significant growth in recent decades, despite boom-and-bust mining. While iron mining is important, Minnesota can avoid future taxpayer liability likely for sulfide mining and can diversify our economy to take advantage of our Great Outdoors heritage and resources.

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### Caucus logistics and strategy

- 1) Participate in your Minnesota precinct caucus, **Tues, Feb 7, 2012 (for all political parties)**
- 2) **Bring many copies of resolution (only)** on small pieces of paper to hand out at caucus, and provide fact sheet if there is interest in background info.
- 3) Get elected to your caucus Resolutions Committee so that you can shepherd yours through.
- 4) Because resolutions worded differently get left behind in the caucus process, it is critical **NOT to change the language** for it to be effective.

To find your precinct, Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State

<http://www.sos.state.mn.us/index.aspx?page=1704> (available after January 18, 2012)

or Call: 1 877 600 8683 (tap 1, then 4)