



FSEEE

Forest Service Employees
for Environmental Ethics

AN OPEN LETTER TO CONGRESSMAN RICK NOLAN

Dear Congressman Nolan,

I write on behalf of a group of U.S. Forest Service employees who steward our national forests for the benefit of all Americans. Theirs is a difficult job, balancing the interests of those who recreate, work, and visit our forests.

Your co-sponsorship, together with eight Republicans and one Democrat, of the Resilient Federal Forests Act (HR 2936), threatens to make our job even harder. As I explain below, HR 2936 is bad for forests and bad for democracy.

Before I get to those points, however, it has not escaped our notice that your HR 2936 endorsement appears linked to Republican support for your PolyMet mine land exchange legislation (HR 3115). Under the Obama administration, the Forest Service approved the PolyMet exchange after completing a rigorous environmental review required by law. In your words, “We have the world’s toughest environmental regulations, state and federal laws, and financial assurances — all in place to ensure that mining is done the right way.”

We agree. The Forest Service’s scientific and public review of the PolyMet proposal is why you can now take a principled stand favoring this land exchange. Without that process, this land exchange would be indefensible.

What’s good public policy for the PolyMet mine is just as important when it comes to the over 190 million acres that make up our national forests. HR 2936 would weaken longstanding laws that ensure national forests are conserved for future generations.

HR 2936 would exempt logging of up to 10,000 acres from environmental review;

HR 2936 would weaken protection for threatened and endangered species;

HR 2936 would make it more difficult for the public to have a say in how its forests are managed;

HR 2936 would remove normal checks and balances that help ensure the U.S. Forest Service follows the law; and,

HR 2936 would open the door to the kind of destructive old-growth forest logging that makes it impossible for Forest Service rank-and-file employees to ensure responsible forestry.

Just imagine the uphill battle you would face supporting mining jobs in your district without the assurances proper environmental review and regulation provide. In your words, the PolyMet land exchange bill would not “interfere in any way with state and federal regulations and permitting that govern the mining of strategic minerals on the Iron Range.”

Why, then, Mr. Nolan, are you willing to interfere with environmental laws that protect the public’s national forests?

Sincerely,

Andy Stahl
Executive Director

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