

**House Natural Resources Committee
Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources**

**Testimony by Ruthe Batulis
President of the Minnesota Conference of Chamber Executives**

March 21, 2013

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee, good morning, my name is Ruthe Batulis and I am the President of the Dakota County Regional Chamber of Commerce, also in Minnesota. We are a regional chamber of commerce in the southeast suburbs of the Twin Cities. We proudly serve the cities of Eagan, Farmington, Lilydale, Mendota Heights, Mendota, Rosemount, Sunfish Lake, and West St. Paul. And we're proud to contribute to the outstanding quality of life our businesses enjoy every day. I also currently serve as president of the Minnesota Conference of Chamber Executives – the professional association for chamber leaders across our state.

We are also tremendously excited about the Jobs for Minnesotans Coalition, and what strategic metals mining means for the *entire* state of Minnesota and the country.

As you know - business and labor don't always agree, but when it comes to job creation, and specifically the jobs that will come with the mining of strategic metals in Northern Minnesota, we couldn't agree more.

Minnesota is fortunate to have an abundance of natural resources. We are literally "by nature" an agricultural state, a timber state and a mining state.

What people don't necessarily think of when it comes to our natural resources – and for us what is very exciting – is that thousands of associated and spinoff jobs are created as a result of our natural resources industry. When the strategic metals mines start producing materials, entrepreneurs and workers across Minnesota and throughout the Twin Cities will have new opportunities in all kinds of industries. These strategic metals are used in electric car batteries, smart phones, wind turbines and other high tech equipment. The sky is the limit.

Imagine Minnesota's medical device manufacturing industry, or Minnesota's many national defense contractors and suppliers with the opportunity to creatively utilize strategic metals mined right here in Minnesota. That is on the horizon.

Furthermore, Minnesota (especially Dakota County) has some of the best schools in the country. Providing for schools is a good investment, but it isn't cheap! Resources for our schools are constantly an issue of public discussion and debate. Our schools will gain tremendously from an emerging strategic metals industry in Minnesota, because of the royalties generated from the projects that directly benefit our schools. In Minnesota, royalties from mining go directly into what our law makers call our "school trust fund." The addition of Strategic Metals Mining in Minnesota will add to this existing fund. Businesses and construction unions alike need skilled workers for the future,

and as such, education and workforce development issues are paramount. The prospect of this kind of new investment is thrilling.

My members are always seeking ways to make their processes more efficient and effective to serve their customers. The fact that you are all working together to make the permitting process more efficient and effective is a wonderful sign to us of a renewed commitment to my members and businesses in general.

We are blessed in Minnesota that any large-scale projects and the jobs that follow come with the equivalent of “Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval.” Our environmental laws are among the most stringent in the world, ensuring that our precious waters are protected from the outset through our thorough permitting process. Our citizens can always rest assured that permitted projects have undergone responsible and extensive scrutiny by the Department of Natural Resources, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency and other state agencies.

As my friend Harry said during his testimony, Minnesotans just recently worked across party lines to ensure this responsible scrutiny is done in an efficient manner so that permit seekers have certainty and investors will continue to seek opportunities in Minnesota and the U.S.

I applaud you all for working to do the same here in Washington, and appreciate what you are about to accomplish to help foster job creation in Minnesota and across the country.

I am happy to answer any questions you may have.
