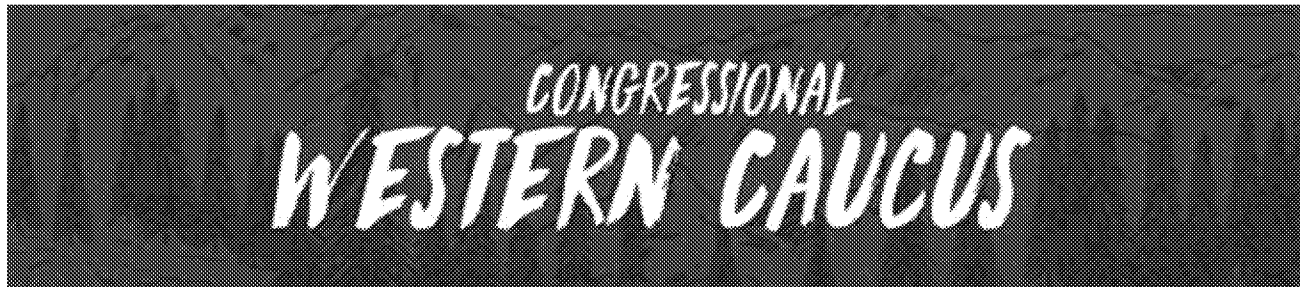


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CC: Hanson, Tanner [Tanner.Hanson@mail.house.gov]
Subject: New DOI Legal Opinion Confirms Lawless Minnesota Land Grab, Rejects Arbitrary Anti-Mining Actions by Obama



For Immediate Release
Contact: Jeff Small

Date: December 22, 2017
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New DOI Legal Opinion Confirms Lawless Minnesota Land Grab, Rejects Arbitrary Anti-Mining Actions by Obama



WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, Congressional Western Caucus Chairman **Paul A. Gosar D.D.S. (AZ-04)** and Western Caucus Member **Tom Emmer (MN-06)** released the following statements after the United States Department of the Interior’s Office of the Solicitor issued a new legal opinion concluding that Twin Metals Minnesota has a non-discretionary right to a third renewal of its two federal mineral leases held in

Northeast Minnesota for more than 50 years and determined that the BLM does not have discretion to deny the company's renewal application:

Congressman Emmer said, "Minnesotans send our gratitude to the Department of the Interior for their action to reverse course set by the Obama Administration and allow our great state to regain control of our mineral leases to advance responsible mining. This action today, coupled with the passage of the MINER Act last month, demonstrate a commitment to unwind the politically motivated actions by the previous Administration and put Minnesota and the nation on a path to prosperity for local economies and communities for generations to come."

Western Caucus and House Committee on Natural Resources Subcommittee on Energy and Minerals Chairman Paul Gosar said, "Today's legal opinion confirms that President Obama and his agency minions had no legal authority to cancel two mineral leases in order to appease anti-mining extremists. I thank Secretary Zinke, Deputy Secretary Bernhardt and their team as well as President Trump and his staff at the White House for hearing the concerns of the people of Minnesota and working diligently to overturn the Obama Administration's lawless land grab."

Background:

Courtesy of the Department of the Interior:

Today, the United States Department of the Interior's Office of the Solicitor issued a new legal opinion concluding that Twin Metals Minnesota has a non-discretionary right to a third renewal of its two hardrock mining leases, located in the Superior National Forest in northern Minnesota. The new M-Opinion (Memorandum Opinion) M-37049 reverses and replaces a prior opinion on the topic which was issued in March 2016.

Under the new legal opinion, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) will work together with the surface management agency, USDA Forest Service, to reconsider a 2016 decision in which the BLM denied Twin Metals' pending lease renewal application. The agencies will conduct the appropriate environmental analysis under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to make a final agency decision on the application and to identify appropriate terms and conditions for surface protection.

The M-Opinion is available [HERE](#).

Courtesy of the Western Caucus

On November 30, the House took action to reject the Obama Administration's Minnesota land grab by passing H.R. 3905, the Minnesota's Economic Rights in the Superior National Forest Act.

The full press release can be found [HERE](#).

On January 19th, 2017, the day before President Trump was sworn in, the previous administration published a 234,328-acre federal mineral withdrawal application in the Federal Register, to restrict for a 20-year moratorium, lands within the Superior National Forest in Northeast Minnesota.

This action immediately placed this vast area off limits to future mineral leasing, exploration and potential development for two years while the 20-year withdrawal is being considered. The total withdrawal application boundary spans approximately 425,000 acres, including 95,000 acres of state school trust fund lands.

In conjunction with this massive mineral withdrawal, the Obama Administration's Bureau of Land Management inappropriately rejected Twin Metals Minnesota's application to renew two hardrock mineral leases in Minnesota's Superior National Forest – leases that were signed in 1966 and renewed without controversy in 1989 and 2004.

These bureaucratic decisions could decimate local economies, stifle job creation as well as cause significant harm to K-12 education and mining in Minnesota. These were political, anti-mining and anti-education actions taken by the Obama Administration.

The University of Minnesota-Duluth estimates the creation of 12,000 construction jobs and 5,000 long-term mining jobs if mining projects already being pursued in Duluth Complex are allowed to move forward. These are good-paying jobs, as the average annual mining wage in Minnesota was \$78,635 in 2015.

Education will be significantly harmed as Minnesota is projected to lose up to \$3 billion in royalty revenues for the State's Permanent School Trust Fund that would support nearly 900,000 K-12 students statewide if the withdrawal application and cancelled leases are not rejected.

To date, Twin Metals has invested upward of \$400 million – a significant investment – in reliance on the two federal mineral leases that the BLM executed with the company's predecessors and renewed each time they expired.

Today's action was the first of three actions by the Trump Administration that need to occur to reverse the Obama land grab.

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