City of Babbitt

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July 5, 2017

The Honorable Rick Nolan
U.S. House of Representatives
2366 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Via email: Will.Mitchell@mail.house.gov

Dear Congressman Nolan:

As the Mayor of the City of Babbitt, Minnesota I write this letter in support of H.R. 3115, the Superior National Forest Land Exchange Act of 2017. Our city has a rich mining history that exists cohesively with the abundant natural amenities that are also attractive to the tourism industry.

For our community to continue to thrive, we encourage this legislative action which will require the U.S. Forest Service and PolyMet Mining to move forward and complete the NorthMet Land Exchange within 90 days. We understand that enactment of the bill will not authorize any mining to occur, but passage and a timely resolution of the exchange would help create thousands of good-paying mining or mining-related jobs in our region for generations to come.

PolyMet has already gone through a thorough and comprehensive environmental review under the National Environmental Policy Act and the Minnesota Environmental Policy Act. The Final Environmental Impact Statement was validated by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources with its adequacy decision in March 2016 and by the U.S. Forest Service in its January 2017 Final Record of Decision (ROD), but the land exchange still isn't finalized.

The exchange and the bill itself are in the best interests of Babbitt and the region of northeastern Minnesota. Under H.R.3115 and as outlined by the Forest Service in its the ROD, this land exchange decision best serves the public's interest. The federal land is not easily accessible to the public. It is largely inaccessable because it is surrounded by private lands and lacks road or other public overland access. The private lands the Forest Service will acquire will be protected and follows the goals of the Superior National Forest Plan. These lands have higher public values than the federal land for wetland and open space conservation, wildlife and public recreational use.

The City of Babbitt commends your leadership and supports efforts to bring closure to this process through Congressional action. Thank you for supporting our way of life. We strongly urge bipartisan support for and rapid passage of the enabling legislation through the U.S. Congress.

To demonstrate our support, we have attached a resolution from our City Council. Please let me know if we can be of any further assistance in moving this matter forward. I can be reached at 218-827-3464.

Sincerely,

Andrea Zupancich

Andrea Zupancich
Mayor

CC: Senator Amy Klobuchar
Senator Al Franken