



## **Repeal the Mining Moratorium in Wisconsin; create family-supporting jobs, and a boon to our economy**

By Nathan Conrad

It is time to set the record straight on Wisconsin's mining moratorium. We need to stop the fear mongering around an industry that helped build our state and could help our economy once again. The opponents of Senate Bill (SB) 395 do not explain the economic impact that the mining industry could have if Wisconsin allowed nonferrous metallic mining. This is mining of gold, silver, copper, and zinc, which are materials that are a part of our daily lives like the vitamins we eat every morning and the Prius that you see drive down the street. Mining would provide good-paying, safe jobs in Northern Wisconsin and across our state, if we pass SB 395.

In fact, a single typical mine in Wisconsin would create 300 permanent jobs with an average compensation package between \$81,000 to \$88,000 a year, which is similar to workers in neighboring states. At the public hearing on SB 395, we heard about how Wisconsin is sitting on a "treasure chest" with the deposits that are in our ground. We could have good, safe, and family-supporting jobs in Northern Wisconsin that could use this type of economic development within their local communities.

We cannot turn a blind eye to the economic challenges that face Northern Wisconsin and the job creation that mining would bring to this region. These are not just mining jobs or local job creation at a mine site. The passage of this instrumental bill will also mean economic growth across the region and state in mining-related industries like manufacturing and construction. We do not have to choose between protecting the environment and supporting these economic opportunities in the Badger State – we can do both.

During the public hearing on SB 395, experts on hand clearly demonstrated that the sound development of our state's natural resources can, and will, provide family-supporting jobs throughout Northern Wisconsin, while protecting the natural resources that we hold dear. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) also testified how difficult it is to compare sites in other states to proposed sites in Wisconsin because of different geology and hydrogeology across North America.

SB 395 does not seek exemptions from environmental standards currently in the statutes and it does not preempt local regulations. The truth is that in 2011, the Bureau of Land Management and United States Forest Service reported to the United States Senate that since 1990, they have permitted more than 3,300 mines and none have ended up on the National Priorities List established under CERCLA (Superfund).

We even have a successful example of safe, clean mining right here in Wisconsin, despite what the naysayers claim. The opponents of this legislation do not want to talk about how Flambeau Mine was also determined to be in compliance with the Clean Water Act and [Judge Barbara Crabb](#) recognized that: "[The Flambeau Mining Company's] exemplary efforts to protect the environment during its mining operations and reclamation effort. These efforts deserve commendation, not penalties."

It is important to remember that the Flambeau mine operated in the 1990s with a state-of-the-art treatment plant to ensure compliance with all groundwater and surface water standards.

Kennecott Flambeau even received the Hardrock Mineral Award for Community Outreach and Economic Security from the U.S. Department of Interior's Bureau of Land Management, which "recognizes the successful coordination of projects with local and regional stakeholders" and "focuses on the concern shown for community responsibilities and the economic benefits of mineral development."

The hearing highlighted real examples of modern mining, not references to times in our nation's history when environmental standards were not what they are today. We should talk about how Minnesota and Michigan are taking part in the economic benefits of mining, while Wisconsin sits on the sidelines. This legislation provides for a commonsense regulatory process that provides oversight from the DNR, public input, and a timeline for the permitting process. We should allow the DNR to evaluate mining projects based upon their specific permits and the specific circumstances of operating in Wisconsin. The passage of SB 395 will help bring economic prosperity to Northern Wisconsin and our entire state, while maintaining strong environmental protections.

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#### **About Natural Resource Development Association**

The Natural Resource Development Association supports policies that lead to proper, necessary, and conscientious resource development and conservation. By engaging community leaders, laborers, manufacturers, and job creators in the legislative and decision-making process, the association will help create open atmosphere for resources development that is both environmentally sound and economically beneficial for Wisconsin. For more information, please visit [DevelopOurResources.org](http://DevelopOurResources.org).