



Statement before the Assembly Committee on Jobs, Economy and Small Business

Andy Albarado, Rusk County Development, WEDA President-Elect

Chairperson Williams, members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to provide an economic development professional's perspective on the potential economic opportunities relating to iron mining in Northern Wisconsin.

I am Andy Albarado, Director Rusk County Economic Development Corporation, and President-Elect, Wisconsin Economic Development Association.

The Wisconsin Economic Development Association is a statewide association with over 450 members. We support state policies that strengthen our economy and add jobs.

In that regard, we urge you to pass legislation that provides a rigorous but passable regulatory path for iron mining in Wisconsin. We believe that the passage of this needed legislation can and must be done in a timely manner so that the economic opportunities are not unduly delayed or lost.

We also recognize it is imperative that any legislation assures adequate protection for our environment. We are convinced, however, that such protections can be afforded without unduly limiting the significant economic development prospects iron mining offers Northern Wisconsin and the entire state.

I am sure the committee will hear detailed testimony on the enormous economic opportunities mining provides, but the prospects highlighted on Gogebic Taconite's web site are astonishing, even if only partially grasped.

- They project that the 2-year mining construction phase will have a \$2 billion total economic impact, including over 3,000 construction jobs.
- During the first phase of the mine, they project 2,834 total jobs will be created, including 700 direct mining jobs with an annual average salary estimated at \$60,000 (plus approximately \$20,000 in benefits), producing a total *annual* economic benefit of \$604 million.

There is nothing remotely comparable in terms of economic development potential for Northern Wisconsin, or for that matter, the entire state. We simply cannot let this opportunity be lost.

I truly believe we can couple scientific and technological advancements with rigorous regulatory legislation to assure any mining activity in Wisconsin will be second to none from both an environmental and economic development perspective.

Thank you again for this opportunity to testify here today and we wish you success in this important endeavor.

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