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Prusi Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Nov 10, 2009

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U.P. Lawmakers Issue Joint Statement Condemning Anti - U.P. Ballot Proposal

In a state where divisions between people and regions have held us back for far too long, we can't help but look askance at proposals that divide our state, rather than unite us.

As elected leaders from the U.P., we view a recently-announced ballot proposal to ban mining under the clever guise of protecting water to be nothing more than an attack by special interests on the U.P. and its people, heritage, and economic future. The people of the U.P. should have the right to decide what is in their region's best interest. Additionally, a statewide precedent could be set where ballot initiatives could negatively impact other industries such as agriculture, manufacturing, or siting of renewable energy facilities.

For nearly 160 years mining has been a critical component of the economy of the U.P. and the entire State of Michigan. It has served in the past to provide jobs to U.P. families and economic growth to our area. Mining can and should be a critical component of the future economy of our region.

A couple from Grosse Pointe is leading this effort to place on the ballot before the state's voters in 2010 the question of banning future mines in the U.P. They even resort to the disappointing scare tactic of creating a ban on future "uranium mining" in this proposal, even though no "uranium mining" activity has ever existed, nor has any uranium ore been discovered, in our state. Their effort is wrong for the U.P. and wrong for Michigan.

There can be no mistake about their intentions, and no one should be fooled by their claims.

While proponents' public statements indicate that they only want to further regulate mining, nothing could be further from the truth. The changes they seek won't strengthen Michigan's recently enacted mining law and regulations - the strongest mining law in the country. Make no mistake. They will BAN any future mining. These proposed changes create an iron-clad guarantee that there will be no future nickel, copper, gold or other metal mining in the UP.
No one should be misled to believe otherwise.

This is not just a job killer; it is an industry killer and an economy killer for the Upper Peninsula.

Within three pages of legal gibberish are a road to nowhere for any future mine that is proposed in the U.P. And that road to nowhere is a road to economic devastation for the families that live and work in the Upper Peninsula, and for the communities of the region. While people in the U.P. are struggling to find work during these challenging economic times, wealthy backers of this ballot proposal are using misinformation and scare tactics in an effort to make the U.P. their private playground.

Our changing auto industry and our growing alternative energy sector depend on basic raw materials such as steel, copper, and nickel to produce environmentally-friendly hybrid vehicles, advanced batteries, wind turbines, and solar panels. Unfortunately, if the backers of this ballot initiative are successful, Michigan companies will be forced to continue importing the vast majority of these strategic raw materials from foreign countries while our resources remain ignored and our workers lose out on jobs.

The U.P.'s business, labor, and governmental leaders are already coalescing around efforts to defeat this ill-timed and ill-intentioned proposal. Just this past October, the Upper Peninsula Association of County Commissioners unanimously passed a resolution opposing the ballot proposal. We will stand with them in their efforts and oppose this attempt by narrow, selfish interests from below the bridge to impose their will on those of us proud to call the U.P. home.

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