



# Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy

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## **Rep. Nolan proposes PolyMet land giveaway**

*Bill would harm taxpayers and trample the public's right to a fair hearing*

**ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA** — U.S. Representative Rick Nolan's bill (HR 3115) to arbitrarily approve a land exchange for PolyMet Mining places a bargain basement price on 6,650 acres of public land in the Superior National Forest land and destroys taxpayers' rights to a fair hearing.

"Rep. Nolan's bill is a giveaway of public land, plain and simple," said Kevin Lee, staff attorney at Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy (MCEA). "It is a windfall for PolyMet and a swindle of public land users who use public land for hunting, fishing, and recreation."

Federal law requires land exchanges to be made on an equal value basis to protect taxpayers. Nolan's bill circumvents this critical protection and gives PolyMet a sweetheart deal. Nolan's bill assigns a bargain basement value of just \$550 per acre for the land PolyMet needs for their proposed open pit sulfide mine. PolyMet and other mining companies have paid up to five times as much for similar nearby land owned by private landowners.

"Rep. Nolan, and any other elected leader who supports his bill, should explain to the public why they are willing to give away public land for a song," continued Lee. "We stand on the side of taxpayers and protecting public land. What side does Rep. Nolan stand on?" he asked.

MCEA, the Center for Biological Diversity, and the W.J. McCabe Chapter of the Izaak Walton League filed suit in federal court in March to overturn the U.S. Forest Service decision to approve a land exchange with PolyMet Mining. The land exchange would give PolyMet thousands of acres of critically important wetlands in Superior National Forest, where mining operations would forever destroy the wetlands that form the headwaters of the St. Louis River. Other lawsuits have been filed challenging the land exchange because of its impact on endangered species and failure to comply with the federal Weeks Act.

Nolan's bill would eliminate the public's right to a hearing to examine whether the PolyMet land exchange protects taxpayers and public resources.

"Nolan frequently talks about 'respecting the process' on PolyMet, while touting 'strong standards' that protect the public. This bill shows he doesn't respect laws that protect taxpayers and that he is working with PolyMet to undermine standards that protect the public," Lee concluded.

**The Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy** (MCEA) is a nonprofit organization using law, science, and research to protect Minnesota's natural resources, wildlife and the health of its people. ([www.mncenter.org](http://www.mncenter.org))

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