

January 30, 2015

Letter to the Editor

I write in response to an article written by Gail C. Roberts – Counterpoint: *Mining revenue is fool's gold for early education* - that appeared In the January 27, 2015 Star Tribune.

Ms. Roberts opines as follows:

“Early-childhood education deserves a legitimate, ongoing source of state funding, not tainted money from the expansion of copper nickel mining in northern Minnesota . . . ” opines Ms. Roberts. And, *“New mining ventures cannot provide stable funding for early-childhood education, not only because they pose their own risks to taxpayers, but because of the volatile, cyclical nature of the mining industry.”*

Further opines Ms. Roberts:

“Mines frequently close and mining companies regularly go bankrupt because of price fluctuations.” “This is why adequate financial assurance for pollution cleanup is critically needed and why early-education funding from school trust lands mining leases would place our children’s education at risk.

When Ms. Roberts gets the basics of mineral leasing wrong in the first sentence of her letter, it certainly calls into question all of the points she attempted to make in her article. Minnesota’s state Constitution which was adopted in 1857 established the Permanent School Fund, which consists of the proceeds of lands granted by the United States for the use of schools within each township. Revenue from school trust land mining leases has continuously funded Minnesota education since 1890, the year after iron ore was first discovered in northern Minnesota.

State education has continuously benefited from the many enacted state statutes directing the Department of Natural Resources to derive revenue from mineral leased lands for the benefit of all. Education continues to receive considerable revenue from Minnesota school trust land royalties. In 2013 Mineral lease revenue derived from school trust land was \$31.4 million dollars.

Ms. Robert’s assertions that mineral tax revenues from school trust lands are neither legitimate nor on on-going source of educational funding are erroneous, baseless and contrary to the facts.

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