

Senator Boyle, Representative Welsh and Members of the Committee, my name is Troy Jackson and I represent Senate District 35, part of Aroostook County.

I am here today to offer respectful opposition to the several mining bills before you. I understand the concerns of the sponsors of these measures and share many of them: the environment of Maine must be protected.

But I am asking the Committee to consider all the work, all the compromises and all the protections of the bill considered by this Committee last session on mining. A bill that had bipartisan support in the Committee and bipartisan votes in the House and Senate.

No Legislature is bound by the decisions of a past Legislature. But every legislator should respect the work and consider the decision-making of those who came before us.

So let me offer some perspective on how the law in place today came about. And, let me give you some assurance, that unless I am satisfied with the rules the Department and the Board of Environmental Protection put before this Legislature next year, I will be right here alongside the environmental community fighting to fix any problems and any concerns.

Last year, when some businesspeople seeking changes to mining regulation in Maine came to me to talk about mining in Aroostook, I told them I was interested but concerned. Concerned that my neighbors and my family might have the rivers and streams and lakes that they've enjoyed for generations harmed by careless, haphazard mining practices.

Those business interests came forward with some proposed language. And though I was a co-sponsor, the state representative from Eagle Lake and I demanded in a series of meetings changes to the language and changes to their approach.

The business advocates did not get what they wanted. But Maine got what we needed: a streamlined process that makes mining possible in Maine and environmental protections that will keep our waterways safe.

We knew then and I know now, legislating is about compromise. That's why this Committee spent so much time listening to ALL points of view and accepting many suggestions from the environmental groups.

But now we are only half-way through the process - the rules haven't even been drafted! -- and already those same groups that demanded so many changes and saw so many compromises are back again seeking to unwind the progress made here last Session.

I ask you respectfully, before we amend a law most of which hasn't even taken effect, shouldn't we as the Legislature at least wait until the rulemaking is complete? Shouldn't we consider the actions of the citizens who make up the Board of Environmental Protection who will need to finalize the rules for submission to us?

I am for economic development in Aroostook.

And, I am for environmental protection.

I want jobs in Aroostook and the rest of Maine.

And, I want clean rivers and lakes.

I want my kids to have a chance to work in Maine.

And, I want my grandkids to have a chance to fish where I fished with my father.

I won't take a backseat to anyone, from any group, when it comes to protecting Aroostook County's environment.

But I also won't sit back and see a law that might mean hundreds of jobs undermined before we've had a chance to see if the law could work.

Thank you very much and I would be pleased to answer any questions.