



News Release

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MEP: Minnesotans Want Environmental Protection

Statewide Poll Shows Voters Oppose Raids of Legacy Funds & Want Better Enforcement of Environmental Laws

SAINT PAUL – 7 p.m. January 5, 2011 – In a speech to legislators and administration officials today, Steve Morse, executive director of the Minnesota Environmental Partnership (MEP), the statewide coalition of 80 conservation and environmental organizations, emphasized that Minnesota voters want to maintain dedicated Legacy Amendment conservation funds and environmental protections, despite the state’s current economic downturn.

Speaking at the annual MEP Legislative Reception and Forum at the Town & Country Club on Wednesday night, Morse reported on a statewide poll of Minnesota voters conducted after the November 2 election by a bipartisan polling team.

No Raids

“Two-thirds of Minnesotans say we must not let elected officials raid constitutionally dedicated conservation funds to solve short-term state budget problems,” Morse said.

To stay true to the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment – approved by 1.6 million voters in 2008 – MEP will work with elected officials to protect these dedicated funds so they are not raided to solve short-term budget problems or used for purposes not specified in the Minnesota Constitution.

No Rollbacks & Better Enforcement

In addition, Morse also told state officials that 70 percent of Minnesota voters want their elected officials to keep the existing Renewable Energy Standard that requires 25 percent of Minnesota’s energy to come from renewable sources, instead of lowering the standard.

“We can provide a better future for our children and grandchildren by moving forward on the path toward a clean energy future,” Morse said. “Minnesota spends more than \$22 billion annually to import energy – money that is stimulating the economies of other states and nations rather than our own. Instead, our state should be producing more clean home-grown Minnesota energy.

“We need to implement policies that help spur more Minnesota development for solar jobs and industry throughout the state. One way we can accomplish this is with a 10 percent Solar Electricity Standard that will require Minnesota to produce at least 10 percent of our electricity needs from solar power by the year 2030.”

Morse also told officials that Minnesotans want to maintain environmental protections that are in place and to have better enforcement of those protections.

“More than 80 percent of Minnesota voters want industries to continue to follow existing laws that protect land, air and water,” Morse said. “When it comes specifically to the sulfide mining industry, 81 percent of Minnesota voters support requiring better enforcement of existing regulations on mine operators, and resisting attempts to weaken these regulations.”

In addition, Morse said that 85 percent of Minnesota voters polled support a requirement that sulfide mine operators prove they have the financial means to clean up pollution from their mines before they begin operations. Sulfide mining, a new type of mining for Minnesota, has a long history of causing toxic pollution in other states and has been proposed for northern Minnesota near waters that flow into the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness and Lake Superior.

For more information on MEP priority issues, go to www.protect.mn or www.MEPartnership.org.

Minnesota Environmental Partnership is a statewide coalition of 80 nonprofit conservation and environmental organizations, representing more than 450,000 Minnesotans. Formed in 1998, MEP works with its member organizations to protect and restore Minnesota’s lakes, rivers, streams, forests, wildlife habitat and natural areas.

**Polling data is from a statewide telephone poll of 701 registered Minnesota voters, conducted Nov. 16-21, 2010 for the Minnesota Environmental Partnership by the bipartisan research team of Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates (D) and Public Opinion Strategies (R). The margin of sampling error for the statewide sample is 3.7 percentage points, plus or minus, at a 95 percent confidence level; margins of error for subgroups within the sample will be larger.*

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