



**Range Association of  
Municipalities and Schools**

5525 Emerald Avenue

Mt. Iron, MN 55768

[rams@ramsmn.org](mailto:rams@ramsmn.org) • 218.748.7651

---

**Tuesday, February 11, 2025**

Representative Josh Heintzeman  
Environment Committee  
Minnesota House of Representatives  
2nd Floor, Centennial Office Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155

**RE: RAMS comments regarding HF 8 (Heintzeman)**

Representative Heintzeman:

On behalf of the Range Association of Municipalities and Schools (RAMS), representing 69 local units of government in the Taconite Assistance Area (TAA), and serving over 155,000 residents in 27 cities, 27 townships, and 15 school districts in the 13,000 square miles of northeastern Minnesota commonly known as the Iron Range, we encourage support for HF 8 (Heintzeman) as well as future dialogue and development of this timely, impactful, and important piece of legislation.

RAMS was formed in 1939 to promote and serve the regional needs of Northeastern Minnesota communities on the Iron Range. We have lived the impact of broken permitting and regulatory processes firsthand and hope to see a resolution to this ongoing issue. In addition to the process improvements contained in HF 8, we would encourage additional discussion and development on the bill, including, but not limited to:

- Strengthen the Ombudsman language to include cross- and inter-agency accountability. Consider this not as a “single person” model, but a distributed leadership model with multiple touch points and built in accountability. Encourage more front-facing checklists and outcome-oriented processes. How can the navigator/ombudsman increase accountability and outcomes?
- The addition of a community/labor/industry panel (with report required) to develop a plan for ongoing continuous improvement (CI) of Agency processes.
- Incentivize agency level decision-making: Reflect on the current state of hiring additional permitting professionals and what changes may be relevant. Currently, the “pay to expedite” feature is not incentivizing agency level decision making, nor achieving timely outcomes.
- Concerned that eliminating the scoping process for mandatory EIS, which is meant to limit the breadth of issues covered in an EIS, moves everything to the EIS, creating a “high stakes” situation as items that would have been deemed not significant now have equal treatment as issues that are significant.
- Consider ways to support agency staff by reframing and removing “reporting for failure”. Current reporting methods focus on tracking and cataloging failure, rather than focusing on continuous improvement and dialogue between staff, community, and project proposers. Focus on reporting as a tool for improvement, not punishment.





**Range Association of  
Municipalities and Schools**

5525 Emerald Avenue

Mt. Iron, MN 55768

[rams@ramsmn.org](mailto:rams@ramsmn.org) • 218.748.7651

---

RAMS sincerely appreciates the leadership shown in HF 8. We also appreciate that this is a process. What you are doing to further permitting and regulatory reform builds an even broader coalition that started the important first steps taken during the 2024 legislative session. We hope to be a helpful partner as this legislation moves forward. We stand ready to contribute what we can, where it makes sense, for the benefit of our members in the Taconite Assistance Area, knowing that improving outcomes helps everyone statewide, regardless of zip code.

Sincerely,

**Paul Peltier**

Executive Director

Range Association of Municipalities and Schools

218.431.1317

[paul@ramsmn.org](mailto:paul@ramsmn.org)

*Sent via email*

cc:

Range Delegation  
Senator Justin Eichorn  
Senator Robert Farnsworth  
Senator Grant Hauschild  
Representative Ben Davis  
Representative Spencer Igo  
Representative Roger Skraba  
Representative Cal Warwas  
Commissioner Sarah Strommen, DNR  
Commissioner Katrina Kessler, MPCA  
RAMS Board of Directors

***Range Association of Municipalities and Schools (RAMS)*** The organization represents more than 90,000 residents and 69 public sector units of government, including 27 cities, 27 townships, and 15 public school districts in the 13,000 square mile Taconite Assistance Area (TAA) of northeast Minnesota. As an organization, RAMS has represented the interests of the Iron Range region for 85 years.

