

CRITICAL AREA REMARKS 5-18-16

THANK YOU FOR GIVING ME THE TIME TO SPEAK TODAY.

I have chosen to make my home for the last 17 years in St. Paul and will continue to live here as long as possible. I live on the same street on which my maternal grandparents lived when I was growing in Collegeville. For much of my life I have known what a special place St. Paul is. I appear before you today to suggest and to recommend as strongly as possible, that you not support changes in the Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area (MRCCA) recommended to you.

Along with the late Congressman Bruce Vento, I wrote the legislation which authorized the Mississippi National River Recreation Area. The legislation was a compromise between a Democrat who preferred to make this 72-mile unique metro river corridor a National Park; and a Republican Senator whose experience as chair of the first Metropolitan Open Space Commission taught him to trust the people of the state of Minnesota and the local governments of the metropolitan area.

To trust them and their elected officials to preserve and to protect this uniquely precious natural resource, as well or better than the National Park Service. 40 plus years ago DFL Governor Wendy Anderson trusted me to do the work of designing a regional response instead of state for our parks and open space. That plan still brings millions of state wide tax dollars to this region and to this city.

I persuaded Bruce to agree to the plan that has served us well for 38 years. Knowing full well, as we both did, that there is always pressure from commercial interests to use the river for industrial and commercial purposes. Pressure from cities like this one to develop and broaden a tax base to support the costs of public services. Pressures on cities like this one to expand upward the residential and commercial tax base of a growing population, and to expand it especially in unique areas like the river. Where proximity to public natural areas enhances the property value and thusly the taxing potential. We knew that, and we trusted St. Paul especially to appreciate what we were doing and why.

However strong the temptation, and it is reflected in the proposed amendments, on behalf of millions of people for whom this river will always be a natural resource to be shared by all of us, not just a few with a temporary vista, I ask you to resist the temptation. To make the point even more strongly, I chose to come here today to tell you that I do not believe you have the authority to do what you propose to do. You do not have the authority, or the moral right, to take from the shared natural resource of this state and our nation, to satisfy the temptation to provide for a very few residents of St. Paul, what truly belongs to all 300,353 of us. Or all six million of us. Or all 322 million of us.

That includes former Vice-president Walter F. Mondale, with whom I have shared and discussed these remarks and this recommendation. He asked me to inform you that he is in full support of the position I have asked you to take.

Thank you for allowing me this time and this opportunity.

Dave Durenberger

U.S. Senate 1978-95

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