

January 20, 2023

Senator Bobby Joe Champion
President of the Senate
95 University Avenue W.
Minnesota Senate Bldg., Room 3401
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Senator Champion:

I am writing today in enthusiastic support of the confirmation of Ida Rukavina as commissioner of the Department of Iron Range Resources & Rehabilitation. Because I had the honor of serving as commissioner of this agency for eight years, I have a unique perspective on the experience, knowledge and passion needed to thrive in this role.

The agency's mission is to invest resources to foster vibrant growth and economic prosperity in northeastern Minnesota. Ida's work experience has prepared her well to carry out this charge. In her most recent position as the executive director of Range Association of Municipalities and Schools (RAMS), she worked with over 60 local elected officials from the schools, cities, and towns across the Taconite Assistance Area. Ida regularly collaborated with Iron Range Resources & Rehabilitation staff on economic and community development initiatives. As commissioner, she also will be able to draw from her vast prior experience working in the labor movement and government.

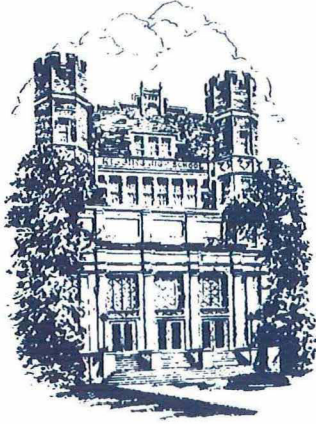
Ida's strong educational background includes a Bachelor's Degree in Government and American Politics with a concentration in Race and Ethnic Relations from Clark University and a Master's Degree in Advocacy and Political Leadership from the University of Minnesota – Duluth. This in-depth coursework will be an asset to her in providing transformational leadership, tackling complex issues and challenges, and creating new opportunities for the region.

Most importantly, Ida has the passion and drive to excel as commissioner. As a native Iron Ranger, she loves our region and is dedicated to improving the quality of life for our residents. I am confident that the agency and region will prosper under her leadership and look forward to seeing the great things that she will accomplish.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mark Phillips".

Mark Phillips



Hibbing Public Schools
Independent School District No. 701

800 East 21st Street • Hibbing, Minnesota 55746
218-208-0848 Fax: 218-208-0866

Richard B. Aldrich, Superintendent

richard.aldrich@isd701.org

November 28, 2022

The Honorable Tim Walz, Governor of Minnesota
Office of Governor Tim Walz and Lieutenant Governor Peggy Flanagan
75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Ste. 130
Saint Paul, MN 55155-1611

Dear Governor Walz:

I am writing to highly recommend Ida Rukavina for appointment to the IRRR Commissioner Position. Ida currently serves as the Executive Director of RAMS. I am a current member of the RAMS Board, and have worked directly with Ida on various initiatives during her tenure.

Ida has taken a leadership role in all aspects of her current position. This leadership, coupled with the highest level of attention to detail, has allowed Ida to gain the respect and admiration of our board, and the entities she serves. Her approachable, collaborative, and genuine personal style has permitted Ida the opportunity to create positive change and streamline operations within the RAMS Association.

Another successful area of focus for Ida has been her developing relationships with business, local communities, and the range delegation. Ida has successfully advocated for issues important to our region and has won the support and admiration needed to move projects forward.

Ida is well positioned to lead the IRRR Board as it transitions from DFL domination, to a bi-partisan advisory board. Her strengths are rooted in finding common ground and solving problems. The range needs a strong advocate to position ourselves for a changing economic future.

Ida has been able to make this very difficult position of RAMS Executive Director seem effortless. Through her hard work and dedication, our association has made enormous gains. Although it would be difficult to find a suitable replacement for Ida, it is without reservation that I highly recommend her for appointment. Please feel free to contact me with any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Richard B Aldrich

TONY SERTICH

4498 Ugstad Rd – Unit 233, Hermantown, MN 55811 | 218-966-0984 | tony_sertich@yahoo.com

November 27, 2022

Governor Tim Walz and Lt. Governor Peggy Flanagan
130 Capitol
75 Rev Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Governor Tim Walz and Lt. Governor Peggy Flanagan:

I am writing to support the candidacy of Ida Rukavina for Commissioner of the Department of Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation.

Having known Ida for over two decades, I believe she possesses exceptional qualities that would benefit your administration and this unique development agency that serves an area of the state that I represented for over a decade. I would like to focus on four key strengths of Ida I feel make her the best candidate for the job: 1) Strong relationships; 2) Centered in Iron Range communities; 3) Inclusive leadership; and 4) Understanding of government at all levels.

Ida has strong relationships not just across the Iron Range, but within the broader region and state. She has worked to develop good working relationships with government officials, steelworkers and company executives, tribal leaders, educators, and owners and workers of many main street businesses to name a few. Ida is passionate about the Iron Range while understanding and working towards the interconnectedness of the region and state. She would be able to hit the ground running in all aspects of the agency's work across economic and community development based on the depth and breadth of those she knows.

Being born and raised on the Iron Range, Ida has dedicated her career to the betterment of our communities and people. She knows our history. She knows why things are the way they are—and more important—I have seen a desire from her to make things better for all. She appreciates the little differences in communities and needs across the vast rural region. Being

grounded and centered in the lives and experiences of our region will allow her to be a clear and authentic voice in the region and within your administration.

As the executive director of the Range Association of Municipalities and Schools (RAMS), Ida has excelled in showing Inclusive leadership. It can be a challenge to lead an organization of elected and appointed leaders from each community and school with—at times—competing interests. Ida has been able to work across many political, geographic, and other differences to find common ground and advance causes important to northeastern Minnesota. I believe this specific leadership will help her as she relates to the advisory board of regional state legislators and lead her team of directors at the agency.

Ida has a complete understanding of government at all levels. Her adept political antenna and keen understanding of how systems work (and sometime don't work) for people and communities give her the ability to lead an organization that has one foot in state government and one with many local governments and tribal nations across a region the size of West Virginia. Her time working as a staff member for labor unions and Senator Klobuchar will help her relate and motivate the dedicated employees at the IRRRB.

Ida brings all these strengths to the region which is seeing a generational shift in leadership across all sectors and communities from mayors, city council members, and superintendents to business owners and state legislators. You have an incredible opportunity to build on this generational shift with your appointment. Ida has the rare gifts of an appreciation for the history and cultures of the Iron Range with an eye towards the future and what is possible when we work together. As someone who was honored to serve in this position, I enthusiastically recommend Ida Rukavina as the next commissioner of the IRRRB.

Sincerely,



Tony Sertich

**Office of the Mayor
Laurence Cuffe Jr.
327 1st Street South
Virginia, Minnesota 55792**

November 29, 2022

The Honorable Governor Tim Walz
75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd, Suite 130
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55155-1611

Re: Letter of Recommendation

I write to you today in support of Ida Rukavina for the position of Commissioner for the Minnesota Department of Iron Range Resources. I have had the privilege of working with Ida on several projects and legislative issues when she was a representative for Senator Amy Klobuchar and now as the President of the Range Association of Municipalities and Schools, RAMS.

As you know, Ida is the daughter of long-time Democratic Representative Tom Rukavina. She is cut from the same cloth with a passion, expertise, and commitment to public service. In addition to her duties as the President of RAMS she is the host of a monthly meeting with all the Iron Range Mayors. She constructs a business agenda and arranges for presentations and updates on the issues that affect the Iron Range, which includes but is not limited to, broadband, affordable housing, childcare, municipal infrastructure, responsible mining, and a strong advocate for legitimate bond funding.

I have always been appreciative of the re-appointment of Mark Phillips as the current Commissioner who has regrettably announced his retirement at the end of this year. These are big shoes to fill. We need a Commissioner that can carry forward the traditions, goals, and objectives of IRR Board. Ida is a loyal, ethical, and compassionate candidate who will assume a leadership role, collaborate with State and local officials, and help provide for the success and vitality of the Iron Range and northern Minnesota.

For these reasons, and many others, I am offering my recommendation for Ida Rukavina as our next Minnesota State IRR Commissioner.

Respectfully,

Laurence Cuffe Jr.
Mayor, City of Virginia

November 23, 2022

Governor Tim Walz
Office of Governor Tim Walz and Lieutenant Governor Peggy Flanagan
75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Ste. 130
Saint Paul, MN 55155-1611

Dear Governor Walz,

I am writing today in support of Ida Rukavina seeking the position of Commissioner of the Department of Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation. As a long time Mayor and a leader in the Labor movement, who has also been politically involved, I have known Ida in many roles. She has worked hard for the Labor movement, donating her time each year to attend and organize the Labor Day Picnic in Virginia and attending strike lines and picket lines and rallies.

Most recently, as the Director of the Range Association of Municipalities and Schools (RAMS), she has done an outstanding job leading that organization. Her communication skills have been top notch and she has kept our city updated about resources available to us and issues that impact us. RAMS advocates for us at the state legislature on many topics that impact us such as bonding requests, Local Government Aid, in addition to broadband, housing and trail funding. She also works with the Iron Range Mayors group which is a diverse group of Mayors. Ida always has the best interest of our communities and brings that to the forefront. She is able to bring together this group of Mayors to collaborate together and address issues such as the School Trust lands, mining projects, and advocating for a special session this past spring when the legislature adjourned without a bonding bill.

Mark Phillips has done a great job as Commissioner of the IRRR. The next commissioner should continue that role of advocating for our small towns and cities. I know Ida will lead the IRRR passionately and looking out for the best interests of our communities. She supports jobs that pay living wages, public education and higher education for our skilled workers, and advocates for our region to have access to high-speed broadband so that our workers, students and communities can compete at the same level as more populated regions. Ida takes the time to think about how issues that arise will impact our region and advocates for the best solutions. I know she will do an excellent job as Commissioner.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rick J. Cannata". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line extending from the end.

Rick Cannata
Mayor, City of Hibbing
(218) 841-2380



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Duluth, Minnesota 55802-2640 U.S.A.
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November 28, 2022

Governor Tim Walz
Office of Governor Tim Walz and Lieutenant Governor Peggy Flanagan
75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Ste. 130
Saint Paul, MN 55155-1611

Dear Governor Walz:

I am writing in support of Ida Rukavina's application to serve as the next Commissioner of the Department of Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation (DIRRR). I write this letter representing my position as Executive Director of the Duluth Seaway Port Authority (DSPA) and based upon my long-time working relationship with Ms. Rukavina. The Arrowhead Region's economic base (inclusive of Duluth) is tied inextricably to the Iron Range. The responsible development of the Iron Range's natural resources is critical to the economic health of our region. The DSPA is an economic development agency with a mission of bringing business to the Port of Duluth-Superior, bringing economic development to the region, and advocating for maritime transportation, freight and industry. We view the DIRRR as a critical partner in strengthening and diversifying the region's economic base.

I can think of no better candidate for this position than Ida Rukavina. She has devoted her professional life to the success of the Iron Range and its communities. She has demonstrated her ability to work with people from across the political spectrum and displaying diverse ideologies. Whether in her time in the AFSCME union, working for Senator Klobuchar, or with RAMS, she has demonstrated a deep knowledge of the people and of the Iron Range, and has successfully represented their needs at the local, state and federal levels. There is no doubt that she will be a steadfast supporter of economic projects for the Iron Range. She will also work to make the region a welcoming community, and deal head-on with the demographic, workforce, housing and childcare challenges facing the region.

The upcoming decade is critical to the region. Hibbing Taconite is running out of iron ore, Cleveland-Cliffs' Northshore Mining is in an idled state without a confirmed reopening date, and the steelmaking industry is undergoing rapid evolution which could diminish the Iron Range's role without concerted strategizing and investment in the region. At the same time, the green energy transition should translate into opportunity for the Iron Range. The DIRRR needs a forward-looking, strategic leader who has the ear of the Governor's Office and the legislature and who can work with a diversity of organizations. Ida Rukavina is that leader.

Thank you in advance for giving Ms. Rukavina your utmost consideration for the position of Commissioner.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Deborah B. DeLuca'.

Deborah B. DeLuca
Executive Director



Emily Larson
Mayor



218-730-5230



elarson@duluthmn.gov

Room 422
411 West First Street
Duluth, Minnesota 55802

November 28, 2022

Dear Governor Walz and Lt. Governor Flanagan,

Thank you for your service to Minnesota!

I write with great enthusiasm in support of Ida Rukavina and her application to serve in your administration as the Commissioner of the IRRRB.

What happens on the Iron Range with regard to economic strategy matters to us in Duluth. While we are not within the IRRRB district and do not directly benefit from the determinations made by their own governing board, our economies and communities are inextricably linked.

A strong region is one where we all benefit, whether directly through investment and subsidy, or indirectly through resilient and visionary community development. As Mayor of Duluth, I have always worked to ally and understand how Duluth can be a good partner and co-investor in a shared future with our Iron Range and broader St. Louis County neighbors. In Duluth we care about how our neighbors are doing and we know that healthy communities across Minnesota make us all safer, stronger and more secure.

Ida Rukavina is a leader who understands all of this. As a lead staff to Senator Amy Klobuchar, Ida demonstrated her ability to stay on message and harness the platform of an elected leader to be effective in advancing an agenda. As RAMS Director, Ida has shown her ability to convene divergent leaders around a shared vision and has done so with her own brand of leadership, grace, humor and relationships.

As IRRRB Commissioner, Ida will bring her own specific and strategic vision to the work while aligning with your cabinet around One Minnesota. She will speak up and out to hold her own while also being a great team member.

I truly think the world of Ida Rukavina and hope you'll give her application the highest consideration. She will make you, and Minnesota, proud.

My best wishes,

Emily Larson
Mayor

November 23, 2022

Governor Tim Walz
Office of Governor Tim Walz and Lieutenant Governor Peggy Flanagan
75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Ste. 130
Saint Paul, MN 55155-1611

Sent via Email

Dear Governor Walz,

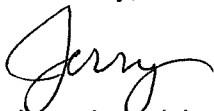
I am writing today to express my support for the consideration of Ida Rukavina as the next Commissioner of the Department of Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation. As someone who has long represented the core Iron Range and is still involved in supporting our local community, I have a vested interest and concern in our next Commissioner. I have sat on the Board of the IRRRB and want to see the best for our region. The future of the Iron Range rests on having the next generation of our leaders step up into leadership roles. That's why I'm so excited to lend my voice towards Ms. Rukavina in this role.

I have known Ida almost her entire life and have seen the work she has done throughout the years. For years, she has volunteered and donated her time, along with her growing family, to ensuring that our represented officials win elections. She has worked as a union staff representative and has very good relationships with Labor all across the region and state. Ida has spent her career working to ensure that working families get the best benefits and wages they deserve. If there is a rally or meeting in support of working families, she's there.

She also has one of the best understandings of how the Iron Range works, both politically and economically. She has the knowledge of our history, but also has a keen understanding of the current lay of the land. Ida is respected by people from across the region and from different spectrums. I know her commitment to the people of the Iron Range will serve us well in this role. In her work with RAMS, she has shown she is committed and dedicated, but also has an eye to the future. New ideas along with supporting education and new technology will be what keeps our region strong into the future. Ida has worked at both the state and federal level and has relationships and knowledge that we need in this position. The Iron Range is a unique part of our state. The production tax from the ore we mine is managed by the IRRR and this agency plays an extremely important role to our region. We need someone who is committed to the schools, cities and communities of the region and I know Ida will fulfill this commitment.

In closing, I hope you will give Ida Rukavina the utmost consideration for this role as the next Commissioner of the Department of Iron Range Resources. Thank you for the consideration.

Sincerely,



Jerry Janezich
Former MN State Senator
Chisholm, MN
(651) 260-1658

November 29, 2022

Honorable Governor Tim Waltz
Office of Governor Tim Waltz and Lieutenant Governor Peggy Flanagan
130 State Capitol
75 Rev Dr Martin Luther King Jr Blvd., Suite 130
St Paul, MN 55155-1611

REF: Letter of Support for Ida Rukavina

Dear Governor Waltz,

The Range Association of Municipalities and Schools (RAMS) writes this letter in support of Ida Rukavina for the soon to be vacant Commissioner of the Department of Iron Range Resources & Rehabilitation. RAMS is an organization that serves over 60 government organization (Cities, Townships and Schools) across the Taconite Assistance Area. Our 24 member governing board is made of up elected officials from city councils, township boards, school boards and local superintendents.

Ida is currently serving as our executive director of RAMS and has been in this capacity for the last year and a half. When RAMS brought Ida on as our executive director, our board was impressed with her work experience, her educational background as well as her work in our communities within the Iron Range. She can and has brought people together to have the tough conversations that affect our area.

Ida has served RAMS well. Under her leadership she has brought organizations together to work towards the implementation of the Boarder to Boarder broadband pilot program in our region. She has also brought regional leaders together to talk about our critical housing needs for our workforce and struggling families.

Ida, born and raised on the Iron Range, she has the history of the area being the fourth generation growing up on the range. And she chose to raise her two daughters on the range to be the fifth generation of her family to stay here on the range. Ida has a vested interest in our area and it shows in her work.

Ida's education, personal work experience and being involved in her local community, along with knowing the history of northeastern Minnesota, would be a great fit for the Commissioner of the IRRR. She brings so much to the table and would do great work for the Taconite Relief Area.

“One Range...One Voice”

On behalf the 60 organizations that are members of RAMS we would recommend and encourage you to appoint Ida as the next Commissioner of the Iron Range Resources & Rehabilitation.

If you should have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me. My number is 218-244-1122.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pat Medure". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Pat Medure

President, RAMS Board of Directors

ISD 318 School Board

Governor Walz-

I strongly support the appointment of Ida Rukavina to the position of Commissioner of the Department of Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation (IRRR). I have known Ms. Rukavina for several decades personally and in her professional capacity since 2015 and in that time have come to know her well and respect her very much. Her intellect is keen, her breadth of knowledge impressive, and her commitment to service deep. I cannot think of a better combination of qualities for a Commissioner of the IRRR.

I care very much about the future of the Iron Range and the State of Minnesota. I want my children to be able to raise their own families in the kind of environment in which they grew up— enjoying the outdoors and reveling in the quality of life that my family has cherished for 3 generations in Northeastern Minnesota. The Iron Range has been the heart of America’s mineral and forest productivity for over a century and it’s time to build on that legacy by charting a course to the future. We also have much more to offer and as Commissioner of the IRRR, Ms. Rukavina will carefully steward the resources available to continue the good work that came before and catalyze economic diversification.

I’ve worked with Ms. Rukavina on several projects, in different professional roles, over the past seven years from broadband to childcare to housing to workforce to economic development. Most recently, I was on the Iron Range Housing Summit planning committee that she co-led with St. Louis County and the IRRR. This summit was well-attended and well-received by our community, as evidenced by the feedback we've received. Ms. Rukavina recognizes the issues the Iron Range needs to focus on and brings her energy, extensive network, and resources to the table to elevate them and help discover solutions. Further, she listens to practicing economic and community development professionals and identifies gaps in the systems that support our work. This discernment and ability to focus on the prescient issues of our time, while understanding the future implications, will help her lead the IRRR with skill and finesse.

My relationship with Ms. Rukavina is both personal and professional; however, I’m going to set the latter aside for a moment and focus on my personal impetus for writing this letter of support. I am sure that each applicant for this position can describe a combination of education and professional qualifications that are suitable for the position; however, to be perfectly blunt, it’s time for a smart, educated, Iron Range woman to lead this organization. The last time I had the luxury of a female role model as IRRR Commissioner was when Governor Pawlenty appointed Commissioner Layman in 2003. With the number of amazing women on the Iron Range who possess the education and experience to take on this role, I'm amazed that it's taken almost two decades for a candidate of Ms. Rukavina's caliber to seek this opportunity. Ms. Rukavina’s combination of professional experience, education, character, and intelligence make her the best choice to serve the Iron Range and Minnesota as a member of your cabinet.

If you have any further questions, please feel free to reach out to me.

Sincerely,

Betsy Olivanti

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/betsy-olivanti-6617246/>

eolivanti@gmail.com

4003 Long Lake Shores Road, Eveleth, MN 55734

November 30, 2022

To the Honorable Governor Walz,

I would like to support Ida Rukavina for the position of IRRRB Commissioner. Ms. Rukavina has an ideal resume for this unique Commission position that is of vital importance to the Iron Range and the economy of all MN.

My first experience with Ms. Rukavina was as a Councilmember for the City of Ely. She was the ACSME Labor Representative, and our council participates in union negotiations. She was well-read, always prepared, and fair. There was a mutual respect in the room as we worked through contract issues.

When Ms. Rukavina became the RAMS Executive Director, I personally saw changes immediately. The communication and outreach improved. The meetings and what the organization sponsors has a "pulse" on the current issues of the membership. The organization became more dynamic and felt more inclusive.

Ms. Rukavina knows the Iron Range and knows it well. She knows "who's who in the zoo". She could hit the ground running. As Mayor-Elect of Ely I would look forward to working with her.

These are just a few examples of why I believe and highly recommend Ms. Rukavina for IRRRB Commissioner.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me.

Heidi

Heidi Omerza

223 West Harvey Street

Ely, MN 55731