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SF3480 White Earth State Forest Land Transfer

Dear Chair Hawj and Members,

As a veteran I ask for you to oppose approval of SF3480 White Earth State Forest Land Transfer.

Senate File 3480 introduced by Senator Kunesch removes State owned from all access for any use by Minnesota residents and visitors, restricts access to Minnesota landowners, and will negatively impact recreation related commerce in the area. State-owned land created for public use such as White Earth State Forest, Upper Sioux Agency State Park, and Lower Sioux Agency Historic Site never reached the status of surplus property nor do any reach an end to their use.

Before any of these proposals move there should be open and transparent meetings.

Senator Steve Green has heard from dozens of Tribal members and descendants, as well as other local landowners in opposition to this transfer. The bill does not state that the land will have to remain accessible to non-members if the transfer goes through. That means this land may become inaccessible to folks across the state who have enjoyed those lands for generations, and there is nothing in the bill that will allow non-members to continue hunting, hiking or snowmobiling as they have for years.

Because the area is currently a state forest, everyone can hunt on the land and use it for many purposes. This includes members of the tribes, as well as the general population. This can all be done currently, and the state maintains the land. But if this bill passes, the responsibility to maintain the lands will now fall on the tribes. There's also a clear concern that this change will make it harder for family members of tribal members to have access to these areas. White Earth has a diverse population.

I oppose SF3480 until this action has gone through the public review process.

Respectfully,

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