

I voted Yes on H.R. 5544, the Minnesota Education Investment and Employment Act.

This bill directs the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to exchange federal lands with the State of Minnesota for about 90,000 acres of state-held lands within the Boundary Waters Canoe Area. Under the bill, USDA would decide which federal lands to exchange and the legislation prevents the banning of hunting and fishing on the state-held lands that would be exchanged, as such activities are currently permitted on those lands.

The Boundary Waters Canoe Area is comprised of forest, lakes and rivers and is part of the Superior National Forest. When the Canoe Area was established decades ago, more than 90,000 acres of state lands held in trust to provide funding for Minnesota schools became effectively landlocked within the Canoe Area. Because of this, the state could not develop the land or otherwise use it to raise funds for local schools. In March of this year, the Minnesota state legislature and Governor enacted legislation to expedite the state's portion of a land exchange.

I supported H.R. 5544 because it would allow Minnesota to start putting land back to use for students by raising education revenue through economic activity and job creation.

The bill was approved by a vote of 225 – 189.