



May 1, 2024

Erin P. Murphy
Senate Majority Leader

Melissa Hortman
Speaker of the House

Bobby Joe Champion
President of the Senate

Jamie Long
House Majority Leader

CC: Senate Members

CC: House of Representatives Members

Minnesota State Capitol
75 Rev Dr Martin Luther King Jr Boulevard
St Paul, MN 55155

RE: Rise and Repair Coalition Policy Positions on Several Pieces of Legislation

Dear Senate Majority Leader, Speaker, and members of the Legislature,

Rise & Repair is a diverse alliance of people and organizations united behind policy-work centering Climate Justice and Indigenous Rights. With myriad political forces applying pressure to influence the outcome of legislation, this alliance seeks to navigate these decisions in a way that centers justice, equity, and wisdom at this defining moment in the broader human story.

The escalating and interconnected climate and ecosystem crises are unfolding in ways that disproportionately affect the communities, people and places where the members of this coalition live, work, pray, organize and advocate. With these people and places in mind, we know that truly addressing and repairing these ecological and community harms will require reorganizing and rethinking our systems of energy, production, consumption and land-use in ways that prioritize the health and wellbeing of the most impacted and marginalized communities. This legislative session, this coalition has supported and worked to pass bills that would do just that while also raising serious concerns and objections to policies that would cede ever more power and control to the vested industries and interests that have benefited and profited from the exploitation and extraction of resources, wealth, and health of our communities and lands.

In this spirit, the undersigned organizations offer this letter which recommends our elected officials take policy positions on several pieces of legislation which are (and we anticipate will be) active in conference committee:

Mille Lacs County Land Transfer (HF5121/SF5162 - Environment): This bill returns to the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe land adjacent to Lake Mille Lacs that Minnesota's DNR has determined is not needed for its resource management. Please support the senate version of the bill.

Zero Waste Bills

Packaging waste reduction (HF3577/SF3561 - Environment): We urge legislators to strengthen the Packaging Waste & Cost Reduction Act by implementing criteria for alternative collection programs, including commercial packaging, and ensuring full coverage of costs by producers. Clear deadlines for packaging redesign and third-party certification are essential, alongside updates to reporting dates to increase transparency. These measures are crucial for advancing zero waste goals and prioritizing community needs over corporate interests.

Multifamily Composting (HF4409/SF5258 - Environment): This initiative aims to incentivize local communities to tackle the food waste issue collectively. Empowering and educating communities to actively participate in waste management is crucial for environmental sustainability. However, many communities face challenges in establishing effective programs due to limited resources. While initially included only in the Senate Omnibus, this measure garnered positive reception in the House and merits inclusion in the final bill.

Food Waste Prevention and Hierarchy (HF4932/SF4944 - Environment): This proposal outlines guidelines and mandates for major food waste generators to responsibly manage their waste, prioritizing composting over anaerobic digestion. Composting stands out as a more sustainable and eco-friendly approach to food waste management.

Plastic Bag Ban Preemption Removal (HF 3345/SF3541 - State and Local Government): In 2015, Minneapolis City Council took a progressive step towards reducing plastic pollution by banning plastic bags at grocery and retail stores. Unfortunately, in 2017, the legislature hindered cities' autonomy by prohibiting such bans. This bill aims to restore local government authority, allowing them to address plastic pollution effectively.

Electronic Waste Recycling Study (SF3940 - Environment): This study is instrumental in advancing Minnesota's efforts to reclaim e-waste recycling jobs and establish a secure, sustainable source of critical metals essential for the energy transition.

Solar APP+ (HF5171/SF5271 - Energy)

Implementing the SolarAPP+ software for automated permitting of rooftop solar systems is crucial to accelerating Minnesota's clean energy transition, reducing costs for homeowners, and supporting our state's goal of achieving 100% clean electricity by 2040. By streamlining the permitting process, we can make solar installation quicker, cheaper, and more accessible, while

also freeing up resources for local governments to focus on other community priorities. Your support for the bill providing grants for cities to adopt SolarAPP+ is essential in ensuring a more efficient and cost-effective path towards achieving our clean energy goals.

Solar interconnection (HF5097/SF5395 - Energy): Passing this interconnection reform bill is crucial to Minneosta being able to meet its 2040 climate goals and is supported by the state’s investor-owned utilities. This reform will create a cost-share program for distribution grid upgrades that will benefit all Minnesotans, including utility ratepayers, and will also create an ombudsperson who will oversee interconnection disputes. This bill directs the Public Utilities Commission to determine most of the details through commission proceedings.

Networked geothermal pilot (HF4423/SF4760 - Energy): Supporting the geothermal network pilot bills (SF4760 | HF4423) are critical as they offer a pathway to explore efficient and climate-friendly heating and cooling solutions for Minnesota, like geothermal. Your support for these bills is essential to ensure we’ll be able to scale up real decarbonization solutions to meet our climate goals.

Permitting Reform (HF4700/SF4784)

Our organizations have the following concerns regarding the Senate version of the permitting reform bill:

(Please support the House position which does not include these provisions.)

DNR and PCA permitting reform amendment expands its reach beyond the Public Utilities Commission, to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency and the Department of Natural Resources, which could impact various industries and projects. This extension is not germane to the issue of energy permitting, raising constitutional concerns and would shackle the Minnesota Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) without public process or legislative deliberation.

This provision is located in two bills: SF 4784 Article 4 and also in the Environment Appropriations SF 3887 Article 3.)

Transferring environmental review responsibilities from the Department of Commerce-EERA to the Public Utilities Commission: this change would affect all projects under the Commission's jurisdiction, including pipelines. This shift raises concerns about reduced transparency, coordination, and independence in the environmental review process, particularly as it lacked consensus approval and overlooked input from environmental justice and Indigenous communities.

Changing the definition of “Large Energy Infrastructure Facility”: The proposed language replaces the term “large electric power facilities” with “large energy infrastructure facility,” which is defined to include “any associated facility.” This could potentially encompass fossil fuel infrastructure like coal and natural gas plants, pipelines, and carbon capture projects, giving them some of the same regulatory privileges as clean energy.

Reducing the level of detail required in permitting applications: the language replaces the requirement for "engineering and operational designs" with a request for "concepts," diminishing the need for comprehensive project outlines, including associated transport infrastructure such as pipelines and transmission lines.

We will continue to update these positions as bills move through committees and chambers. More is available here: riseandrepair.org

We look forward to working with you in these important matters.

Signed,

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Minnesota Interfaith Power &
Light

Pouya Najmaie
Cooperative Energy Futures

Sean Gosiewski
Resilient Cities and Communities

Jenna Warmuth
Vote Solar

Robert Haider
TakeAction Minnesota

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Johan Baumeister
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Jane Dow
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Rev. Rex McKee
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John Farrell
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Dawn Goodwin
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Katharine Kline
Minnesota Unitarian Universalist
Social Justice Alliance

Judy Greg
West Metro Climate Hub

Kate Winsor
Northeast Metro climate Action

Steve Schultz
Friends of the Boundary Waters
Wilderness

Maggie Schuppert
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Lucy Mullany
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Lori Olinger
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Judy Lissick
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Patty O'Keefe
Sierra Club North Star Chapter

Paula Maccabee
WaterLegacy