Nolan: Mining and the environment can safely co-exist

U.S. Rep. Rick Nolan left no doubt last month that he supports both ferrous and non-ferrous mining on the Iron Range and near the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW).

"We've got the brains, the technology and the know-how to do it, and protect our precious waters, lakes and forests," the Minnesota Democrat said in a speech to the Society for Mining, Metallurgy and Exploration convention at the Duluth Entertainment Convention Center. "It's just a matter of political will."

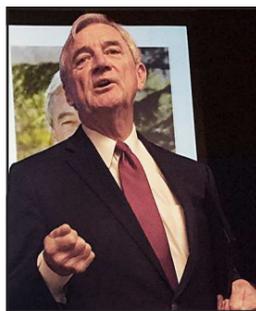This year, the group's Minnesota section is convening for the 89th time.

Nolan has served twice in the U.S. House of Representatives – from 1974 through 1980 and from 2013 until today. His initial term occurred during the period when the BWCAW was named a protected wilderness.

"We made a deal. Millions of acres were taken out of commercial activity, but the remainder would be for mixed-use purposes. That included forestry, tourism and, yes, it included mining. Call me old fashioned, but where I come from, a deal is a deal, and we've got to honor that deal," he said.

He was referring to plans to extract copper, nickel and precious metals via underground mines that are located in the BWCAW watershed. Environmentalists and Gov. Mark Dayton have voiced opposition, saying it's too close to the wilderness area. Nolan, however, believes mining and tourism can safely co-exist.

"The opportunities that flow from that deal are enormous. The minerals we have here are so essential. They're critical. There's hardly any aspect of our life that aren't affected by the ore and the precious minerals that God and nature gave us up here on Minnesota's iron range," he said.

Rep. Rick Nolan

Nolan noted that copper, nickel, iron ore and other precious metals are needed to manufacture wind turbines, cars, cell phones, TVs, iPads and other communication devices. Some also are used in cancer treatment programs, he said, noting his daughter Katherine, who has Stage 4 lung cancer, is among those who have benefitted.

"They are so essential to our success, to our people, to our nation, that we have to proceed with mining of all of these precious minerals," he said. "People who have studied the Duluth Complex have said there's enough mining to continue for 500 years. We have 500 years of opportunity moving forward here."

Citing his past experience owning an export trade company and serving as president of the U.S. Export Commission, Nolan said free trade isn't necessarily fair to all parties.

"Free trade is a wonderful concept or idea, but it doesn't necessarily square with reality – not when other nations are putting in place a wide variety of protections tariffs and taxes through a variety of regulatory schemes," he said. "China is a communist-socialist nation, and unlike us, they don't have to show a profit. The United States can't allow other nations to dump their products here at below their cost of production," Nolan added.

He credited President Obama's Chief of Staff, Denis McDonough, for helping to speed the process of reviewing unfair trade complaints against foreign steel exporters. Late last year, McDonough met with Gov. Mark Dayton, federal and state lawmakers to discuss the problem.

"It's starting to produce good results," Nolan said. "We're already seeing a movement in ore prices and in steel production. It's starting to have the effect we thought it would. The challenges are great, but in my judgment, the opportunities are even greater. We're going to get this done and get it done together," he said.

CW Technology acquires metro firm

CW Technology announced the acquisition of Minneapolis-based CT Technologies, a managed printer repair services company.

For more than four decades, CT Technologies has served the Twin Cities area, from Albertville to Cottage Grove, from Chaska to White Bear Lake, offering office machines, service and supplies. It will now operate under CW Technology, expanding the company's portfolio of services in the Minneapolis location.

"By bringing companies together that share the same values and commitment to service, the client base will benefit from remarkable employees and processes to help move their business forward," said President David Manion.

CW Technology offers managed IT, including, cloud-based, on premise, and data center solutions to allow for on-demand scalability and operational efficiencies. It has offices in Duluth, St. Cloud and Minneapolis.

Fairview, UCare to integrate services

Fairview Health Services and UCare have signed a letter of intent to combine their provider and payer specialties to create a fully integrated healthcare network.

The organizations aim to finalize details of the transaction and secure regulatory approvals by mid-summer.

UCare will become a wholly-owned subsidiary of Fairview, and Jim Eppel will remain as UCare President and CEO, the companies said.

UCare and PreferredOne, which came under Fairview's sole ownership in January, will form Fairview's health plan division. The two payers are the fourth and fifth largest in Minnesota. PreferredOne's expertise lies in third party administration and health insurance products for employers, while UCare's offerings are focused on individuals eligible for Medicare, Medical Assistance and MNsure plans. As Fairview's health plan division, PreferredOne and UCare will work together to leverage their offerings.