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First name: Samuel
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Organization:
Title:
Comments: To whom it may concern,

I am writing to you about the possible gold mine on the South Fork of the Salmon River. My position is very clearly against such a project. I have grown up in and live in Missoula and have experienced the damage such a mine can have on the environment. I have also had the privilege to use the public lands of Idaho, and am scared at the thought that others might not have the same opportunity to do as I did.
I see this issue as pretty straight-forward. Is the risk of damaging the environment worth it if the mine will bring a boost to the local economy? I live in Montana, so can't really speak to the local economy. I am sure that you have seen many letters from other out-of-staters claiming that the local economy can deal. Let's be frank; I can't tell you, either way, I am sure that you have a far better idea than I do. Because of this, I will try to stay away from this argument at risk of sounding like a dumbass.
Instead, I will focus my argument on the environmental impact. Before I get into it, I am going to be running with a few things that I take for granted. Firstly, this mine will have negative impacts on the environment. I'm not sure what the mining companies are saying the impact will be (in all honestly, I'd be really interested to see what their position is), but I have decent certainty that their report is underestimated. Secondly, global warming is real and accelerating at an unprecedented pace. Regardless of how we view the current administration, I think that we have to move forward assuming that global warming is real, the evidence is outrageously overwhelming.
You find yourself at an important junction. A point where your decisions might actually make a difference for a lot of people. That's pretty cool. I congratulate you on getting to a point where you get to make these types of decisions. I believe it was in spider-man, that the quote "with great power comes great responsibility". I think that fits quite well in this situation. You must make an informed decision that will serve the people. And I think that you should vote against the mines. The mines WILL disrupt the ecosystem and take away from the wildness and beauty of the river. Of that, there is no doubt. With global warming, places that have a similar (of course less than) beauty and wildness are being burned and destroyed. Idaho and the Salmon River system have an opportunity to be one of the standing outposts of mostly untouched wilderness. This is something that could make Idaho very unique.
What scares me is that there is a possibility of ruining that for an economic boost. As I previously stated, I can't speak to the economic situation of the area, but I ask you this. What does an economic boost bring? Better jobs for people? That leads to more money for the citizens that you represent. I'm sure that it would. My question is what will the more money actually do for the society that you serve. It will make them support you I suppose. But it probably won't make them happier. Money and happiness don't really have direct ties. Spending time outdoors in the wilderness does however make people happier (data supports that, contact me if you want the sources). To make some massive generalizations and assumptions, by supporting the mines, you would be intruding on something that gives your citizens happiness for something that might make them like you better.
There is also an argument that the majority of the money would go back to the company (particularly the CEOs and shareholders) which is Canadian? The data surrounding wage and economic splits show that this is likely. The rich get richer, and the middle/working class mostly stays the same. How will your citizens feel about mining gold so some Canadians can get rich?
At the end of the day, there is a choice to be made. Is the risk of damaging the environment worth it if the mine will bring a boost to the local economy? I see the answer as no. I believe that you know that it is a bad choice for the long term future. Allowing them to mine might make you popular for a bit, let you keep your job, the rich mining company might be happy with you (not saying they are bribing you, but it's nice having friends in high places). The problem is what decision is going to keep you up at night? Which decision will let you rest easy knowing you did the right thing for the people and land you serve? You are in a position of power where your decision impacts people for generations. Don't take the easy route and appease the mining companies, as a public servant, you have a responsibility to make the right decisions even when they are hard. And if you need

more clarification on power and responsibility, just ask Peter Parker.

Sincerely,
Sam Lund