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Comments: During these uncertain times, Idaho workers and communities of all sizes need economic and employment opportunities more than ever. Attracting private investment to our state is critical if we are going to create well-paying jobs for Idahoans while. stopping businesses across the economic spectrum. The proposed Stibnite Gold Project put forward by Midas Gold Idaho 1could offer our state a rare opportunity to invest in creating local jobs and spurring local economies while at the same time addressing the longstanding environmental issues at the Stibnite Mining District. I believe this project should move forward in the permitting and approval process under Alternative 2 of Midas Gold Idaho's plans for restoration and operations.

As both a public servant and small-business owner, I believe the economic potential of this project alone makes it worthy of support. Once approved, Midas Gold Idaho has stated in Alternative 2 of its plan that it anticipates employing up to 700 workers during the construction phase, contributing an annual payroll that ranges from $42 to $49 million. During the ongoing operations of the project, the company would provide jobs for roughly 500 Idahoans with payroll averaging $42 million.

That's money that will go back into the pockets of hardworking Idahoans and help strengthen local economies. What's more, those are just the jobs that will be directly created by this project; there are hundreds more that would be indirectly supported during each phase. The positive economic impact would support jobs in Idaho communities in sectors ranging from transportation and manufacturing to education, retail, and hospitality.

Midas Gold Idaho has committed to hiring locally whenever possible and has already spent nearly $70 million with local vendors, contractors, and other businesses. The company also has plans to fund ongoing training opportunities for Idahoans over the lifetime of this proposed project, working with local schools, community colleges, and the state Department of Labor to prepare the next generation of Idaho's workforce.

This is precisely the kind of private investment Idaho needs right now. Aside from the sheer economic impact of the jobs created or supported by the Midas Gold Project, there is also the economic impact on local businesses, contributions to state and local taxes, as well as revenue from licensing and permitting to consider. All of these impacts add up to a significant economic win for Idaho the sooner this project is approved.

In addition to strengthening local economies and our entire state's economic outlook, the Stibnite Gold Project would help Idaho regain its former distinction as a leader in the domestic production of antimony. The Stibnite Mining District in Payette National Forest is home to the largest-known antimony deposit in the country. Mining and production of antimony at the site played a critical role during World War II and the Korean War, but today there is currently zero domestic mine production of the critical mineral, despite its use in national defense, aerospace, and energy.

To this day, the only way America is able to meet its antimony needs is by obtaining it with countries like China; Russia, and Tajikistan. Responsibly redeveloping the Stibnite Mining District would help jumpstart domestic production of this vital resource so we are not overly reliant on other countries. Particularly given changing political climates can adversely impact supply chains, it is in our best national interest to ensure we can meet the needs for this mineral independently of other nations.

I believe much of the opposition to this project is due to a lack of understanding of how mining works in the 21 st century. Mining companies must adhere to a number of strict regulations, so today's mining projects are far safer and more environmentally sound than those of the past. We also have state laws that hold mining companies accountable for environmental reclamation costs.

I hope you will agree that-between the jobs and economic impact, the contributions to our national security, and the high degree of responsibility and safety-the Stibnite Gold Project is more than worthy of suppo1t. I encourage the U.S. Forest Service to approve Alternative 2 of Midas Gold Idaho's plan and help bring these benefits to our state and our entire count1y as soon as possible.