

For Immediate Release

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SAVE THE BOUNDARY WATERS

Twin Metals hires former Interior Secretary Bernhardt's firm to lobby on risky mining near Boundary Waters

(Ely, MN)--Chilean mining conglomerate Antofagasta's Twin Metals has hired the lobbying firm of former Interior Secretary David Bernhardt to push its risky mining project next to Minnesota's Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness. Lobbying disclosure filings show Twin Metals hired Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck, [David Bernhardt's firm](#), shortly after Bernhardt left the Trump administration. Twin Metals paid Brownstein Hyatt Farber Shreck \$10,000 in [Q1 2021](#) and \$80,000 in [Q2 2021](#). This isn't the first time Twin Metals has tried to buy influence. In 2016 just after the presidential election the patriarch of the family that owns Antofagasta, Andronoico Luksic, bought a mansion that he immediately rented to Jared Kushner and Ivanka Trump. Soon thereafter the Trump administration began removing protections for the Minnesota's Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness and clearing the way for Twin Metals' risky mine project. Bernhardt's Department of the Interior unlawfully reinstated terminated mineral leases for the benefit of Twin Metals and fast-tracked their risky project. The Trump administration also cancelled a comprehensive study on the impact of copper mining on the Wilderness and subsequently hid the data from Congress and the public. Bernhardt was involved in most of those actions.

"The Antofagasta playbook is always the same. Buy influence wherever it can and use that to push dubious and dangerous claims," said Becky Rom, National Chair of the Campaign to Save the Boundary Waters. "The Boundary Waters isn't for sale. It belongs to the people of the United States. Science and the rule of law dictate that it be protected now and for future generations."

Antofagasta's influence peddling playbook was [recently documented](#) in a Miami Herald investigative piece that looked at how the mining conglomerate robbed a Chilean community of its water. The report details how a dam at Antofagasta's flagship mine, Los Pelambres, cut off the water flow of the nearby Pupio Creek, denying the nearby town of Caimanes the water necessary for its survival. The piece details the environmental damage caused by the mine, the consequences of the loss of water to Caimanes, and the efforts Antofagasta took to defeat the community and keep its controversial dam in place.

David Bernhardt has a long history of blending his personal and the public interest. His time at Interior was marked by multiple instances of questionable ethical behavior.

- He used his various positions at Interior to [weaken protections for the Delta Smelt](#), a policy supported by Westlands Water District and a former lobbying client
- He pushed the department to [weaken offshore drilling safety regulations](#) implemented after the Deepwater Horizon spill, a priority of his former client the National Ocean Industries Association
- He [instructed the Bureau of Land Management to process](#) applications from oil and gas companies to drill on public land during the 35-day government shutdown, a priority of numerous former clients
- There were [at least 70 meetings](#) between top Interior political appointees and entities on David Bernhardt's ethics recusals

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