

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON



NATURAL RESOURCES

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H.R. 1937, National Strategic and Critical Minerals Production Act of 2015

H.R. 1937, the National Strategic and Critical Minerals Production Act of 2015, introduced by Rep. Mark Amodei (NV-2), addresses permitting issues concerning American mineral resources. The current permitting process takes seven to ten years or longer. Minerals are critical for manufacturing competitiveness and economic and national security. The bill requires both the Department of the Interior and the Department of Agriculture to more efficiently develop domestic sources of strategic and critical minerals and mineral materials.

Mining is a Critical Industry

Minerals are essential for agriculture, communication, technology, electronics, construction, health care, manufacturing, transportation, and the arts. Strategic metals and metal alloys are critical for the domestic generation of energy infrastructure including pipelines and renewable energy production, aerospace, defense, and other national security interests. Further, they are responsible for supplying basic necessities: food, clothing, shelter, and a clean, healthy environment. Developing a robust domestic supply chain of critical minerals is essential to America's long-term economic stability.

The Perplexing Situation

The United States is among the world's largest producers of many minerals including copper, gold, lead, molybdenum, silver and zinc, but U.S. mineral exploration has stagnated or declined during most of the 1990s and 2000s due to the cumbersome permitting process and unwarranted litigation. Under current practices and the absence of coordination between various federal agencies, it can take more than 20 years for a mining operation to be approved and come online. Alternatively, during this period of U.S. decline, global mineral exploration increased. Today, the United States is almost entirely reliant upon foreign countries, such as China, for rare earth elements and other strategic minerals. This bill is necessary to set coherent national policy to assure our mineral production and reserves, national security, and global economic competitiveness.

National Strategic and Critical Mineral Production Act of 2015

H.R. 1937 addresses the underlying barrier to a vibrant domestic mineral economy – lengthy permitting timelines and delays – while protecting existing environmental standards. The legislation clearly defines the responsibilities of federal agencies for mineral exploration and mine development project approvals, assuring that bureaucratic inertia and cumbersome process requirements do not become tools for lawsuits to block or delay responsible projects.

For more information, contact the House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources at (202) 225-9297