



Committee: House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Energy & Mineral Resources
Event: [Legislative Hearing on H.R. 1501, H.R. 2969, H.R. 4781, H.R. 5929, H.R. 7126, H.R. 7458](#)
Date: February 24, 2026

Executive Summary:

This hearing featured six pieces of legislation focused on critical minerals development. The legislation included: the SECURE Minerals Act ([H.R. 7126](#)); Finding ORE Act ([H.R. 2969](#)); Domestic ORE Act ([H.R. 7458](#)); Critical Minerals Supply Chain Resiliency Act ([H.R. 5929](#)); RESCUE Act of 2025 ([H.R. 4781](#)); and Protecting Domestic Mining Act of 2025 ([H.R. 1501](#)). Members from both parties agreed on the importance of securing domestic sources of critical minerals to reduce reliance on foreign adversaries. Republican members broadly supported the legislation introduced, calling them necessary steps to encourage the strengthening of U.S. critical mineral supply chains. Democrats criticized the legislation for prioritizing speed of production over federal oversight, environmental safeguards, and community input.

Member Toplines:

Chair Pete Stauber (R-MN-08): Stauber emphasized the need to strengthen U.S. critical mineral supply chains through domestic permitting reform and expanded international cooperation. He expressed support for the bills before the committee. He highlighted the importance of broadening and codifying mining eligibility under the FAST-41 framework; expediting reviews for critical mineral projects; reducing regulatory barriers for early-stage exploration; and establishing a strategic reserve with financing mechanisms to address supply disruptions and price volatility.

Ranking Member Yassamin Ansari (D-AZ-03): Ansari emphasized the importance of critical minerals for economic security and clean energy deployment. However, she contended that federal mining laws must include strong environmental and Tribal protections. She voiced concern that recent Administration initiatives, such as proposed equity stakes in mineral companies and the creation of a federal mining reserve, lack adequate transparency and meaningful congressional oversight. Ansari expressed opposition to the SECURE Minerals Act, citing fraud and accountability risks in establishing a strategic reserve corporation; raised objections to provisions in the Finding ORE Act, granting right-of-first-refusal authority over foreign mineral projects; and criticized the Domestic ORE Act for expanding exploration activity without additional community or Tribal consultation. She expressed interest in bipartisan efforts to improve permitting coordination and transparency through the FAST-41 framework.

Full Committee Chair Bruce Westerman (R-AR-04): Westerman argued that U.S. dependence on foreign sources of critical minerals demonstrates that current mining policies are insufficient, especially as demand for copper, lithium, cobalt, and rare earth elements is expected to rise internationally. He stressed that the U.S. has the resources and capability to develop domestic supply chains for these critical minerals, but federal policies must be updated to expand

mining, processing, and manufacturing. Westerman voiced support for all of the bills under consideration by the committee, specifically calling out the RESCUE Act, the Critical Minerals Supply Chain Resiliency Act, and the Finding ORE Act.

Ranking Member of the Full Committee Jared Huffman (D-CA-02): Huffman emphasized the importance of developing a whole-of-supply-chain approach to reduce U.S. dependence on foreign sources of critical minerals, focused on strengthening domestic processing and recycling without compromising environmental or labor standards. He raised concerns about the Administration's recent equity investments in mining companies, including USA Rare Earths, Trilogy Metals, and MP Materials, highlighting issues with transparency, potential conflicts of interest, and limited federal oversight. Huffman stressed the need for stronger congressional oversight of such investments and noted efforts, including a [letter](#) he co-authored to the Administration, to ensure accountability and protect public interests.

Rep. Harriet Hageman (R-WY): Hageman explained that her bill, the Domestic ORE Act, would address unnecessary delays in early-stage mineral exploration by expanding the threshold for notice-level exploration activities to 25 acres on Bureau of Land Management lands and applying a similar standard to U.S. Forest Service lands. She contended that the legislation would streamline the exploration phase while maintaining reclamation and financial assurance requirements. Hageman framed the measure as a practical step to reduce bureaucracy and strengthen domestic mineral production essential to U.S. economic and national security.

Rep. Rob Wittman (R-VA-01): Wittman argued that China's dominance in mining, processing, and magnet production, poses a direct threat to U.S. economic and national security. He contended that his bill, the SECURE Minerals Act, would establish a strategic resilience reserve equipped with financial tools such as loans, advance market commitments, and price floors to stabilize markets and incentivize domestic extraction and processing. Wittman also promoted the Finding ORE Act, which would authorize the United States Geological Survey to enter into formal cooperation agreements with partner countries for critical mineral mapping and resource assessments.

Rep. Andy Barr (R-KY-06)¹: Barr described critical minerals as essential to national security and modern technology, highlighting U.S. dependence on China for rare earth production, processing, and manufacturing. He explained that the RESCUE Act would expand the [Fixing America's Surface Transportation \(FAST\) Act's](#) covered project definition to include extraction and processing of minerals from coal, coal waste, mine tailings, and related byproducts, ensuring these projects benefit from coordinated interagency review, established timelines, and permitting transparency to make long-term investments economically viable. Barr also presented the Critical Mineral Supply Chain Resiliency Act, which would prioritize permitting under FAST-41 for *Defense Production Act* (DPA) projects deemed critical to national security, matching the strategic importance of these minerals with streamlined federal execution and investment certainty.

Witness Toplines:

¹ Opening statements for each of the above members were not available online at the time of this memo's distribution

[Sean Pi, Founding Partner, Heeney Capital](#): Pi emphasized that prolonged and uncertain federal permitting timelines undermine the feasibility of capital-intensive critical mineral projects, raising financing costs and deterring private investment. He expressed support for the RESCUE Act, which would expand eligibility under the FAST-41 permitting dashboard to include recovery and processing projects such as mine tailings, and for the Critical Minerals Supply Chain Resiliency Act, which would treat certain DPA Title III actions as covered projects under federal permitting frameworks. Pi noted these reforms would accelerate projects by streamlining reviews and automatically qualifying DPA-supported processing efforts for coordinated oversight. He also urged Congress to expand support for feasibility studies and broaden DPA authorities to include allied countries.

[Chelsea Hodgkins, Senior EV Auto Supply Chains Policy Advocate, Public Citizen](#): Hodgkins argued that the Trump Administration's critical minerals agenda has prioritized deregulation over public accountability and environmental protections. She criticized the allocation of at least \$360 billion in taxpayer funding for critical mineral projects, supported by the *One Big Beautiful Bill Act*, as well as federal equity stakes in six mining and processing projects, which she said boosted company stock values and benefited politically connected executives without adequate oversight. Hodgkins warned that the SECURE Minerals Act would establish a \$2.5 billion reserve lacking strong governance safeguards, and that the Finding ORE Act would authorize mineral mapping MOUs and grant U.S. firms right-of-first-refusal abroad without clear environmental or social protections. She urged Congress to pursue a critical minerals strategy centered on recycling, material substitution, circular economy development, and full accounting of federal mining subsidies.

[Mark Compton, Executive Director, American Exploration & Mining Association](#): Compton argued that decades of U.S. policies discouraging mineral exploration and mine development have created a dangerous import dependence that adversaries can weaponize, framing mineral reliance as a national security threat. He stressed that because economically viable hard rock deposits are rare and geographically fixed, maintaining access to federal lands is essential, warning that with roughly two-thirds of federal lands already restricted, further limitations halt investment and undermine discovery. Compton called for incentivizing exploration, streamlining permitting, and developing a skilled workforce, while supporting bipartisan permitting reforms including the SPEED Act ([H.R. 4776](#)) and the Mining Regulatory Clarity Act ([H.R. 1366](#)). He argued that the legislation before the committee would accelerate domestic production while maintaining strong environmental protections and financial assurance requirements.

[Adam Johnson, Chief Executive Officer, Principal Mineral](#): Johnson explained that U.S. leadership in global critical minerals markets will determine pricing power, capital flows, supply security, and the ability to uphold high labor and environmental standards internationally. He argued that all critical minerals policies must function as an integrated industrial system, aligning permitting reform, capital formation, price transparency, allied coordination, and defense industrial base demand signals, to counter concentrated foreign control and state-backed price suppression that distort long-term investment. Johnson called the proposed SECURE Minerals Act an important step in moving the U.S. towards long-term market stewardship.

Major Takeaways:

Domestic Resource Potential

- Barr emphasized that U.S. coal-based minerals could meet strategic mineral needs if permitting barriers are addressed through the passage of the RESCUE Act and the Critical Minerals Supply Chain Resiliency Act.
- Rep. **Nick Begich** (R-AK) highlighted Alaska's vast mineral wealth, highlighting the need for a streamlined federal permitting process to unlock domestic production.
- Hageman stressed that the Domestic ORE Act would expand notice-level exploration of federal lands from five to 25 acres while maintaining reclamation and bonding requirements. Stauber noted that expanding notice-level authority would reduce delays under the *National Environmental Policy Act* and increase exploration efficiency without cutting environmental protections.

Critical Mineral Project Development

- Rep. **Jeff Crank** (R-CO-05) and Wittman emphasized the need to reduce U.S. mineral reliance on China, which currently dominates critical mineral supply chains and manipulates global markets. Crank voiced his support for the SECURE Minerals Act to help reduce price volatility in the global critical mineral market.
- Ansari raised concerns about oversight, transparency, environmental, and social safeguards for U.S. investments abroad, including the Forum on Resource Geostrategic Engagement and right-of-first-refusal provisions.
- Rep. **Susie Lee** (D-NV-03) stressed her support for the SECURE Minerals Act and expressed interest in establishing an intergovernmental body to coordinate efforts to develop a secure domestic supply of critical minerals.
- Westerman highlighted recycling and domestic lithium extraction as critical tools to meet future mineral demand and reduce dependence on imports.
- Rep. **Adelita Grijalva** (D-AZ-07) noted risks to communities from fast-tracked mining projects and legislation under consideration by the committee. She cited the South32 Hermosa Project in Arizona as an example of a project being expedited at the expense of public participation and Tribal consultation.