



Committee: House Natural Resources Committee

Event: [Full Committee Markup](#)

Date: March 5, 2026

Member Toppines:

Chair Bruce Westerman¹ (R-AK-04): Westerman emphasized that geothermal energy is abundant, especially on federal lands, and that expanding its development is essential to meeting America's growing energy demand. He argued that federal leasing and permitting processes cause significant challenges to the development of geothermal resources and that red tape must be removed in order to increase energy abundance and allow the U.S. to remain energy dominant. Westerman also argued that streamlining these processes will help improve energy affordability. He took a moment to applaud the committee for broad bipartisan support on six geothermal bills (H.R. 301, H.R. 398, H.R. 1077, H.R. 5617, H.R. 5631, and H.R. 5638).

Ranking Member Jared Huffman (D-CA-02): Huffman emphasized how refreshing it is to have unanimous consent on 14 strong pieces of legislation, including six focused on geothermal development on federal lands. He suggested that geothermal is a promising and underutilized form of energy that should have bipartisan support. He also stated that the U.S. is a global leader in geothermal and that there is great potential for geothermal on federal lands to combat affordability and the climate crisis. Huffman explained his opposition to two geothermal bills (H.R. 5576 and H.R. 5587), arguing that they have loopholes that need to be tightened to gain bipartisan support.

Legislation of Interest Considered:

[H.R. 5576, Enhancing Geothermal Production on Federal Lands Act](#)

- Rep. **Russ Fulcher** (R-ID-01) spoke in support of his bill, arguing that geothermal projects on federal lands face repeated and duplicative *National Environmental Policy Act* (NEPA) reviews. He emphasized that the legislation is meant to streamline the potential six-step review process.
- Both Reps. **Pete Stauber** (R-MN-08) and Westerman argued that this bill would reduce regulatory delays, lower project costs, and help expand geothermal deployment. They cited recent committee visits to Fervo's Cape Station project as evidence of the technology's potential.
- Huffman warned that the bill creates a blanket NEPA waiver and removes necessary environmental safeguards, arguing that such determinations should remain with agency experts rather than Congress. He repeatedly emphasized that this bill is a broad waiver, rather than a categorical exclusion.
- Fulcher offered an amendment ([01 ANS](#)) to remove the Department of the Interior's (DOI) requirement to survey priority geothermal areas, saying private

¹ Written testimony is not available for Chair Bruce Westerman or Ranking Member Jared Huffman.

companies already conduct such assessments and that eliminating the mandate would reduce unnecessary resource burdens. Fulcher's amendment was passed by voice vote.

- Huffman opposed Fulcher's amendment and offered an amendment to Fulcher's amendment ([Huffman #1 to ANS](#)) to strike the NEPA waiver in the legislation and replace it with wording that directs DOI to, within one year of enactment, develop categorical exclusions. Both Fulcher and Westerman opposed this amendment, saying it would hinder the intention of streamlining the permitting review process.
- Huffman's amendment failed by a roll call vote 21-16.
- The bill as amended was passed by a roll call vote 21-16 and was reported to the House to be favorably approved.

[H.R. 5587, Harnessing Energy At Thermal Sources \(HEATS\) Act](#)

- Rep. **Young Kim** (R-CA-40) introduced the HEATS Act as a targeted effort to eliminate duplicative federal permitting for geothermal projects located on state or private lands, saying it would reduce delays, improve energy reliability, and allow federal agencies to focus on projects actually occurring on federal property.
 - Both Stauber and Westerman supported the HEATS Act, arguing that it would streamline the process and remove redundant federal requirements.
 - Huffman opposed the HEATS Act and argued that eliminating federal drilling permits would remove core environmental and safety protections under NEPA and the Endangered Species Act ([ESA](#)) of 1973.
- Westerman offered an amendment in the nature of a substitute ([060-ANS](#)), which passed by a voice vote.
- Rep. **Emily Randall** (D-WA-06) offered an amendment ([#1 to ANS](#)) to ensure tribal consultation requirements are preserved, citing the importance of tribal engagement in her district
 - Huffman offered support to this amendment and said this was a common-sense safeguard, while Westerman opposed this amendment and stated that it maintains duplicative consultation requirements.
 - The amendment failed by a roll call vote 16-21.
- Del. **Pablo Hernández** (D-PR-AL) offered an amendment ([#2 to ANS](#)) directing a geothermal systems assessment for Puerto Rico, but later withdrew it.
- The bill was passed by a roll-call vote 23-15, and the bill as amended was reported to the House with the recommendation that it be favorably approved.

By unanimous consent, the committee agreed to report all the bills below favorably to the House of Representatives, along with several public lands bills (H.R. 41, H.R. 2252, H.R. 2709, H.R. 2768, H.R. 3831, H.R. 4684, and H.R. 5638) and to enter into the record a [letter](#) from *Geothermal Rising* supporting the full slate of geothermal legislation considered in the markup as common-sense permitting and development reforms.

- [H.R. 301, Geothermal Energy Opportunity \(GEO\) Act](#)

- Rep. **Celeste Maloy** (R-UT-02) introduced this bill to establish a deadline for DOI to process applications related to geothermal leases within a certain timeframe.
- [H.R. 398, Geothermal Cost-Recovery Authority Act of 2025](#)
 - Rep. **Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez** (D-NY-14) introduced this bill to allow the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to levy fees on geothermal operators to offset permitting costs that exist for energy projects.
- [H.R. 1077, Streamlining Thermal Energy through Advanced Mechanisms \(STEAM\) Act](#)
 - Rep. **Susie Lee** (D-NV-03) introduced this bill to extend the geothermal categorical exclusions that are available for certain oil and gas activities.
- [H.R. 5617, Geothermal Gold Book Development Act](#)
 - Rep. **Yassamin Ansari** (D-AZ-03) introduced this bill to require BLM to publish best practices for geothermal leasing and permitting that the agency currently does for the oil and gas sector.
- [H.R. 5631, Geothermal Ombudsman for National Deployment and Optimal Reviews Act](#)
 - Rep. **Jeff Hurd** (R-CO-03) introduced this bill to establish a geothermal ombudsman within BLM to facilitate coordination among field offices, assign experts to projects as needed, and unify geothermal permitting practices.
- [H.R. 5638, Geothermal Royalty Reform Act](#)
 - Rep. **Mike Kennedy** (R-UT-03), the sponsor of this bill, noted that the federal royalty framework has not kept pace with modern energy realities. This bill updates the federal royalty structure for geothermal energy produced on federal lands and adjusts outdated rates, provides greater certainty for investors, and ensures a fair and consistent revenue-sharing framework for states and local communities.
- [H.R. 3553, Building Resiliency and Understanding of Shrublands to Halt Fires \(BRUSH\) Act](#)
 - Rep. **Dave Min** (D-CA-47) and Westerman both spoke on this bill. Westerman explained that it authorizes the study of the effectiveness of hazardous fuels reduction activities on shrubland and grassland ecosystems. Min noted that the BRUSH Act is a bipartisan bill and thanked Westerman for including it in this markup.