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**Committee:** House Energy & Commerce Subcommittee on the Environment  
**Event:** [Ready for Reuse: Legislative Proposals to Unleash the Potential of America's Brownfield Sites](#)  
**Date:** March 4, 2026

***Executive Summary:***

The House Energy & Commerce Subcommittee on the Environment hosted a hearing focused on the reauthorization and modernization of the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Brownfields Program. Members from both parties agreed that the program is a cost-effective tool for cleaning up contaminated sites and driving local economic development. Republicans emphasized using brownfields for "nationally significant infrastructure projects" like data centers, energy production, and critical mineral facilities to boost investment and national competitiveness. Democrats stressed prioritizing local control over redevelopment projects and ensuring that polluting industries are not allowed to participate.

***Member Toplines:***

[Chair Gary Palmer \(R-AL-06\)](#): Palmer identified four discussion drafts under consideration by the Committee to strengthen EPA's Brownfields Program. These include the Brownfields Revitalization for a Better Tomorrow Act ([H.R.](#)) which would update EPA criteria to prioritize projects supporting nationally significant infrastructure such as critical minerals, semiconductors, artificial intelligence, and energy generation; the Brownfields Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act ([H.R.](#)), creating a loan program modeled on federal infrastructure finance programs. Palmer also raised the Brownfields Inventory and Permitting Efficiency Act ([H.R.](#)), which would streamline permitting for projects on certain brownfield sites, and the Brownfields Reauthorization for an Affordable and Revitalized America Act ([H.R.](#)), a minority-sponsored draft which would significantly increase funding for Brownfield Program grants and allow EPA to waive certain cost-share requirements.

[Ranking Member Paul Tonko \(D-NY-20\)](#): Tonko stressed the Brownfields Program's long history of bipartisanship and success. He voiced support for the Brownfields Reauthorization for an Affordable and Revitalized America Act, which would reauthorize the program, raise grant caps, and allow cost-share waivers for small and disadvantaged communities. He warned that the Republican proposals under consideration risk undermining bipartisan support by prioritizing "nationally significant infrastructure projects," including critical mineral development, artificial intelligence (AI) data centers, and energy production, discouraging redevelopment for community uses like parks or housing and weakening environmental protections under the *National Environmental Policy Act* (NEPA).

[Chair of the Full Committee Brett Guthrie \(R-KY-02\)](#): Guthrie emphasized that EPA's Brownfields Program is an important tool for remediating contaminated sites and restoring them to productive use. Guthrie expressed support for the Republican discussion drafts under consideration, arguing they would remove barriers to cleanup and incentivize reuse of

brownfield sites for reshoring manufacturing. He stressed the need for coordinated efforts among the private sector, states, localities, and tribal governments.

[Ranking Member of the Full Committee Frank Pallone \(D-NJ-06\)](#): Pallone highlighted his legislation, the Brownfields Reauthorization for an Affordable and Revitalized America Act, which would reauthorize EPA's Brownfields Program, increase grant amounts to address more complex cleanup projects, and waive cost-share requirements for communities with the greatest need. He criticized Republican discussion drafts for prioritizing "nationally significant infrastructure projects," arguing they would allow private industries, such as data centers, fossil fuel companies, and mining operations, to access limited brownfields funding. Pallone stressed that local communities, not Congress, should determine how redeveloped brownfield sites are ultimately used.

***Witness Toplines:***

[Gerald Pouncey, Senior Counsel, Taft Stettinius & Hollister](#): Pouncey emphasized that effective brownfield cleanup is most successful when private-sector redevelopment is incentivized, arguing that projects are often financially easier to pursue on undeveloped "greenfield" sites without targeted incentives. He stressed that regulatory delays, cleanup uncertainty, and financing challenges remain major barriers to redevelopment and called for policies that accelerate approvals and clarify liability protections. Pouncey also urged Congress to empower state brownfield programs and streamline environmental review under NEPA to speed cleanup and return idle industrial sites to productive use.

[David Robinson, Executive Vice President, Aligned Data Centers](#): Robinson emphasized that the EPA's Brownfields Program presents an important opportunity to support the growth of digital infrastructure, including data centers critical to AI and cloud computing. He highlighted Aligned's investments in repurposing dormant industrial sites across the country, arguing that these projects clean up environmental hazards while generating local jobs and tax revenue. Robinson also stressed the importance of public-private partnerships and federal policies that incentivize redevelopment and streamline permitting to accelerate deployment of infrastructure needed for U.S. technological leadership.

[Alan Tomson, Mayor of the Town of Davis, West Virginia, National Brownfields Coalition](#): Tomson explained that the Brownfields Program has been a successful model of public-private partnership, helping communities clean up contaminated sites and return them to productive use. He urged Congress to pass a "clean" reauthorization that increases funding and grant caps, warning that proposals prioritizing "nationally significant infrastructure projects" could divert scarce resources from local governments and weaken community input protections under the NEPA. Tomson argued that the program should remain focused on community-driven redevelopment rather than subsidizing large industrial or energy projects.

[Chris Wells, Executive Director, Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality & President, Environmental Council of States](#): Wells expressed support for reauthorizing and strengthening EPA's Brownfields Program, describing it as one of the most effective state-federal partnership programs for environmental cleanup and economic redevelopment. He urged Congress to

provide greater funding for state and tribal brownfield response programs and to increase grant caps for assessment, cleanup, and revolving loan fund grants. Wells also supported limited cost-share waivers and expanded funding to ensure rural and small communities can access brownfield redevelopment resources and participate in projects.

### **Major Takeaways:**

- Effectiveness of EPA's Brownfields Program
  - Tonko stressed the importance of providing larger brownfield grant awards to help communities remediate bigger and more complex properties.
  - Rep. **Ann Wagner** (R-MO-02) and Tonko suggested allowing EPA to waive cost-share requirements for communities facing financial barriers, in particular small and rural communities.
  - Wagner emphasized that increased grant maximums, expanded eligible entities, and cost-share waivers are vital steps to reduce barriers for rural and industrial communities.
  - Pallone highlighted the need to increase funding levels for Brownfield Program grants over the next five years to address sites that are increasingly difficult to remediate.
  - Rep. **August Pfluger** (R-TX-11) stressed the need to provide greater funding to the Brownfields Program and to increase staff to ensure small rural communities can access these resources.
- Program Grant Prioritization
  - Rep. **Rob Menendez** (D-NJ-08) and Tonko warned that Republican proposals to prioritize “nationally significant infrastructure projects” could divert resources to polluting industries and limit local control over site redevelopment.
  - Rep. **Nanette Barragan** (D-CA-44) emphasized that local communities, rather than the federal government, should determine the use of Brownfield Program grants, warning that prioritizing data centers could reduce public housing and community parks.
  - Rep. **Greg Landsman** (D-OH-01) cautioned that the redevelopment of brownfield sites for data centers or fossil fuel production could re-contaminate sites after project completion, hurting the program’s efficacy.
  - Reps. **John Joyce** (R-PA-13) and Guthrie supported prioritizing redevelopment for “nationally significant infrastructure projects,” noting that data centers, energy, and critical minerals projects would attract private investment and boost local economies.
  - Rep. **Julie Fedorchak** (R-ND) highlighted that data centers should be prioritized within the Brownfields Program due to their ability to create jobs and protect U.S. national security.
- Community Impact:
  - Reps. **Raul Ruiz** (D-CA-25) and Menendez emphasized that the Brownfields Program drives economic revitalization, supports local communities, and protects public health, particularly in areas impacted by contamination and prolonged disinvestment.

- Rep. **Buddy Carter** (R-GA-02) applauded the Program’s role in Georgia for both environmental cleanup and economic development, and expressed support for the “Brownfields Revitalization for a Better Tomorrow Act” to expedite rural brownfield redevelopment.
- Rep. **Scott Peters** (D-CA-50) explained that data centers can help offset cleanup costs, boost local economies, and connect rural communities to the grid, highlighting the importance of prioritizing their development.
- Palmer stressed that redeveloping Brownfield sites for AI data centers and critical minerals is a national security imperative to effectively compete with China.
- Permitting Considerations:
  - Rep. **Gabe Evans** (R-CO-08) and Peters emphasized that permitting reform is critical to enhancing the effectiveness of the Brownfields Program.
  - Joyce noted that reauthorization of EPA’s Brownfields Program should take measures to provide permitting certainty and avoid duplicative reviews.