



Committee: House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Oversight & Investigations
Event: [Unleashing America's Mineral Potential: The Critical Mineral Commodity Supply Chain](#)
Date: March 25, 2026

Executive Summary:

The House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Oversight & Investigations hearing focused on efforts to strengthen domestic critical mineral and rare earth supply chains. Republican members emphasized the importance of expanding domestic mining and processing capacity through permitting reform, increased federal investment, and top-down initiatives such as the Export-Import Bank of the United States' (EXIM) Project Vault. Democrats criticized the Trump Administration's approach to reshoring mineral supply chains for lacking transparency and congressional oversight. They referred to recent equity deals as "corrupt" for benefiting the family of President Trump and members of the Administration. Democrats requested to subpoena individuals involved in the federal government's equity stake agreement with Vulcan Materials; Republicans tabled this motion.

Member Toplines:

*Chair Paul Gosar (R-AZ-09)*¹: Gosar emphasized that strengthening domestic critical mineral and rare earth supply chains is essential to national and economic security. He pointed out that the U.S. relies on foreign adversaries such as China for the majority of its critical materials supply and underscored the need to expand domestic mining and processing capacity through top-down initiatives such as Project Vault. Gosar highlighted streamlined permitting, supply chain transparency, and increased federal investments as necessary to reshore critical mineral production and processing. He pointed to the approval of the Resolution Copper project in Arizona as a major milestone, stressing its potential to supply over a quarter of U.S. copper demand.

*Ranking Member Maxine Dexter (D-OR-03)*²: Dexter criticized the Trump Administration's critical minerals strategy for prioritizing political connections over sound investment. She pointed to the Trump Administration's "Immediate Measures to Increase American Mineral Production" Executive Order ([EO 14241](#)) as a measure to eliminate financial viability, competitive bidding, and independent technical disclosure requirements before public funds are allocated to companies. Dexter raised concerns with recent government equity deals, including Vulcan Elements and MP Materials. She stressed that these deals reflect a broader pattern of weakening federal oversight and corruption, criticizing the Trump Administration for investing in companies with direct ties to President **Donald Trump's** family.

¹ Opening statement was not available online at the time of this memo's distribution.

² Opening statement was not available online at the time of this memo's distribution.

Chair of the Full Committee Bruce Westerman (R-AR-04)³: Westerman emphasized that securing a domestic supply of critical minerals, including resource mapping, mining, and manufacturing, is essential U.S. national security. He pointed to the U.S.' vast untapped mineral reserves and criticized burdensome permitting requirements and litigation delays for weakening domestic production capacity. Westerman advocated for permitting reforms such as the SPEED Act ([H.R. 4776](#)) for streamlining the permitting process and reducing U.S. reliance on adversaries such as China for critical minerals.

Ranking Member of the Full Committee Jared Huffman (D-CA-02)⁴: Huffman criticized the Trump Administration for providing federal funding to companies without a competitive bidding process or proper congressional oversight. He highlighted the Vulcan Elements deal as an example of the Trump Administration's "corrupt" process for selecting funding recipients, choosing companies that include the President's son and allies of the Administration as primary investors. Huffman applauded the Biden Administration for building a supply chain strategy that was transparent and encouraged a competitive bidding process.

Witness Toplines:

Simon Jowitt, Director of the Nevada Bureau of Mines and Geology, Nevada State Geologist⁵: Jowitt emphasized that while critical mineral exploration is underway across the U.S., gaps in geological mapping continue to hinder the efficient identification and development of domestic resources. He highlighted the importance of U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) programs, such as the Earth Mapping Resources Initiative (EarthMRI), in improving data availability and lowering exploration costs, but noted that additional investment is still needed. Jowitt also underscored the importance of expanding the workforce of geologists and mineral processing experts to accelerate efforts to map and develop mineral supplies

Gracelin Baskaran, Director, CSIS Critical Minerals Security Program, Washington DC⁶: Baskaran emphasized the need to build resilient, fully functioning critical mineral supply chains in the U.S. She argued that the current market distortion is the result of a series of many industrial policy decisions, and she emphasized that supply-side policy actions alone will not fix the issue. She called for permitting reform to take place alongside supply-side actions, and emphasized the need to build long-term, resilient markets, specifically expressing support for the EXIM's Project Vault. She argued that the U.S. must work with our allies to approach supply chain issues; develop government-wide industry-agnostic sourcing mechanisms; and statutorily codify Project Vault.

Abigail Hunter, Executive Director, Ambassador Alfred Hoffman Jr. Center for Critical Mineral Strategy at SAFE, Washington, D.C.⁷: Hunter argued that mineral supply chains must be considered in their entirety, especially for national security applications and the defense industrial base (DIB). She emphasized that the DIB and its mineral supply chains are sustained

³ Opening statement was not available online at the time of this memo's distribution.

⁴ Opening statement was not available online at the time of this memo's distribution.

⁵ Opening statement was not available online at the time of this memo's distribution.

⁶ Opening statement was not available online at the time of this memo's distribution.

⁷ Opening statement was not available online at the time of this memo's distribution.

largely by commercial demand. She noted that scaling supply chains takes time, and she contended that policy solutions must entail incentives to purchase these materials from domestic or allied sources. She noted the long timelines associated with mineral supply chain development, and she highlighted how recent conflicts have illuminated the severity of mineral supply chain constraints. She argued that China has solidified their mineral supply chain dominance over mineral supply chains, specifically for processing, over many decades, and she contended that action to build out domestic supply chains cannot be solely reactive. She emphasized the need for permitting reform and partnerships with allies that have production and processing capabilities.

Faith Williams, Director of the Effective and Accountable Government Program, Project on Government Oversight, Washington, D.C.⁸ Williams raised concerns that recent federal equity deals lack sufficient transparency, ethical safeguards, and congressional oversight. She criticized the Trump Administration's investment in USA Rare Earths, noting that it benefits Commerce Secretary **Howard Lutnick's** sons, who lead Cantor Fitzgerald, the financial services firm managing the company's fundraising. Williams warned that unclear selection processes and potential conflicts of interest could erode public trust and undermine competition for government awards. She added that the most effective way to reshore critical mineral supply chains is through established mechanisms such as the *Defense Production Act* and standard federal contracting procedures.

Major Takeaways:

- Rep. **Eli Crane** (R-AZ-02) argued that copper is a pillar of our national security efforts. He noted the recent approval of the land exchange for the Resolution Copper project in Arizona, emphasizing that this project will help support defense industrial supply chains. He asked Hunter how far-left environmental activists delaying project timelines inadvertently allow adversarial nations to maintain dominance over mineral supply chains.
 - Hunter highlighted several permitting reform proposals overseen by the House Natural Resources Committee, noting that the industry is asking for more clarity, certainty, and durability throughout the permitting process. She emphasized that timeliness can coexist with responsible oversight and processes.
 - Crane asked Baskaran about the importance of Arizona's copper legacy and production for national copper demand. Baskaran noted that Arizona's copper production is important for many industries across the country, adding that there is a structural shortage of copper nationally. However, she also noted a severe lack of domestic smelting capabilities in the midstream and argued for innovative solutions to incentivize smelter development.
 - Crane asked Baskaran to reiterate the importance of Resolution Copper, which can produce 25 percent of our nation's copper demand. Baskaran agreed, noting copper production's importance to new industries like data centers and AI, and argued that domestically produced copper should be sent to domestic copper smelters rather than those abroad.

⁸ Opening statement was not available online at the time of this memo's distribution.

- Crane asked Jowitt to discuss the importance of domestic supply chains from an America First perspective. Jowitt noted the security, economic, jobs, and educational benefits associated with domestic investments and development, and he emphasized the need to think and develop these programs and incentives in advance.
- Huffman criticized the Trump Administration's equity deals. He asked Williams to discuss the risks to American taxpayers when the federal government becomes financially involved in private industries, as well as the impact of these investments on the integrity of public markets.
 - Williams emphasized the need for transparency. She noted that in an equity stake deal, the federal government adopts a multitude of roles beyond a regulator, increasing risks for taxpayers and the businesses themselves.
- Huffman specifically asked Williams about the federal government's investment in Trilogy Metals, as well as associated White House decisions to approve the development of an associated road in Alaska. He contended that records indicate a senior White House official had invested previously in Trilogy Metals, where this official saw his shares increase by \$70 million, before he divested. He asked Williams to discuss how personal financial windfalls for public officials can impact the public's integrity in our industrial base policy.
 - Williams emphasized the need to address both real and perceived conflicts of interest for taxpayers.
- On Vulcan Materials, Huffman noted the strong financial connection between **Donald Trump Jr.'s** private equity firm, 1789 Capital, and Vulcan Materials. He asked Williams if the public should be concerned about this conflict of interest, and Williams concurred.
- Rep. **Harriet Hageman** (R-WY-AL) asked Hunter about mineral exploration and the timely processing of permits, especially for projects in need of *National Environmental Policy Act* (NEPA) reviews. Hageman specifically championed her bill, the Domestic ORE Act ([H.R. 7458](#)), and she asked Hunter how she believes the government should expand its support for critical minerals development.
 - Hunter emphasized the need to implement sourcing provisions and requirements for the DIB to help justify large-scale investments in domestic mineral development. She also noted that a streamlined permitting process will increase investments seen in domestic mineral exploration and development.
 - On exploration efforts, Hunter emphasized the importance of continuing to support the U.S. Geological Society's EarthMRI Program.
- Hageman asked Baskaran to discuss how FORGE can coordinate aggregated critical mineral demands across the U.S. and our allies.
 - Baskaran emphasized the need to concurrently increase domestic mineral demand alongside supply. She highlighted the need to establish incentives within FORGE-associated countries to make purchases competitive; aggregate information from all industries using mineral resources; and address trade barriers among all FORGE-associated countries.
- Dexter discussed particular conflicts of interest in the deal between USA Rare Earths and Lutnick's family. She also highlighted Trump Jr.'s vested interest in the success of the Vulcan Materials deal, arguing that conflict of interest reviews did not occur for either deal. She emphasized her intent to initiate congressional investigations into both events, and Williams agreed that investigations should occur. Dexter moved that the

committee subpoena Trump Jr., Patrick Witt, Formerly Performing the Duties of the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering and Deputy Chief Technology Officer, Office of Strategic Capital, and Ronnie Pruitt, CEO of Vulcan Materials, to testify on the deal as soon as possible.

- Gosar moved to table this motion. Huffman challenged Gosar's motion, arguing it was a parliamentary inquiry. A recorded vote was requested (5-2).
 - Yeas: Gosar; Boebert; Collins; Amodei; Begich
 - No: Dexter; Ansari
- Boebert moved to adjourn. A recorded vote was requested (5-2).
 - Yeas: Gosar; Boebert; Collins; Amodei; Begich
 - No: Dexter; Ansari