



Committee: House Energy & Commerce Subcommittee on Environment
Event: [Trash to Treasure: Examining Legislation to Support Domestic Critical Mineral Recovery and Recycling](#)
Date: June 24, 2026

Executive Summary:

On June 24, 2026, the House Energy & Commerce Subcommittee on Environment held a hearing to examine strategies for improving domestic critical mineral recovery and recycling. Members and witnesses focused on the urgent need to reduce U.S. reliance on foreign adversaries, particularly China, for critical minerals necessary for the defense industrial base, energy transition, and advanced technologies like artificial intelligence and data centers. Discussions explored bipartisan legislation, such as the Battery Recycling for 5 America's Competitive Economy (BRACE) Act ([H.R. ____](#)), the Legacy Mine Cleanup Act of 2025 ([H.R. 3713](#)), and the Coordinating and Harnessing America's Recovery of Minerals (CHARM) Act ([H.R. ____](#)), to streamline permitting and strengthen the domestic supply chain.

Member Toplines:¹

[Subcommittee Chair Gary Palmer \(R-AL-06\)](#): Palmer argued that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) should leverage its expertise to identify opportunities to strengthen domestic supply chains through recovering critical minerals from discarded waste. He underscored the importance of securing fragile supply chains and removing regulatory barriers, noting that adversaries like China are actively weaponizing control over critical mineral supply chains.

Subcommittee Ranking Member Paul Tonko (D-NY-20): Tonko expressed support for strengthening domestic critical mineral supply chains through recycling and resource recovery but stressed that such efforts must not come at the expense of environmental, worker, or community protections. He argued that Congress should pursue a balanced approach that expands recycling and end-of-life battery management to reduce reliance on foreign sources.

Full Committee Chair Brett Guthrie (R-KY-02): Guthrie emphasized that securing a reliable domestic critical mineral supply chain is a national security priority and argued that reducing dependence on foreign adversaries, particularly China, requires expanding domestic recovery, recycling, and refining capabilities. He highlighted the Committee's ongoing work to identify alternative sources of critical minerals and remove regulatory barriers that hinder supply chain development.

[Full Committee Ranking Member Frank Pallone \(D-NJ-06\)](#): Pallone argued that expanding domestic critical mineral recycling and recovery is essential to strengthening U.S. supply

¹ The opening remarks from Full Committee Chairman Guthrie, and Subcommittee Ranking Member Tonko were unavailable at the time of this memo's distribution.

chains, supporting clean energy technologies, and reducing dependence on foreign adversaries. He emphasized that these efforts should be pursued alongside strong environmental, public health, and worker protections. He warned against deregulation and voiced his opposition to the BRACE Act.

Witness Toplines:

[David Klanecky, Chief Executive Officer, Cirba Solutions:](#) Klanecky contended that valuable minerals are often discarded and exported overseas, which inadvertently subsidizes China's critical mineral supply chain. He advocated for deregulation to promote domestic manufacturing and urged Congress to enact policies that classify black mass from lithium-ion batteries as a strategic product rather than solid waste. He emphasized that the minerals needed for future battery production are already present throughout the U.S.

[Greyson Buckingham, Co-Founder, Chief Executive Officer, and President, DISA Technologies:](#) Buckingham argued that increasing domestic production of uranium and other critical minerals is a national security priority that can be achieved through remediating abandoned mine sites. He noted that DISA holds the first and only U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) license to remediate and recycle abandoned uranium mine waste. He contended that existing federal regulations do not adequately support projects that combine environmental cleanup efforts with resource recovery and expressed support for the Legacy Mine Cleanup Act of 2025, the CHARM Act, and the EMRTAI Authorization Act of 2026 ([H.R. 1000](#)).

[Aaron Goldberg, Principal, Beveridge & Diamond:](#) Goldberg argued that Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) regulations are outdated because they were developed before the widespread adoption of lithium-ion batteries. He contended that current regulations incorrectly treat lithium-ion batteries as waste rather than commodities, imposing unnecessary costs that undermine domestic recycling. Goldberg highlighted several regulatory obstacles, including restrictions on battery storage and the classification of black mass as solid waste, which he argued hinder critical mineral recovery.

[Dr. Jessica Dunn, Scientist, Clean Transportation, Union of Concerned Scientists:](#) Dunn argued that expanding domestic critical mineral recycling is essential, but emphasized that Congress should strengthen recycling systems without weakening environmental and public health protections. She expressed support for the CHARM Act but stated that additional efforts are needed to adequately improve battery collection and increase mineral recovery rates. She strongly opposed the BRACE Act, asserting that it would reduce regulatory oversight of battery recycling and black mass, and could weaken existing environmental safeguards.

Major Takeaways:

Proposed Legislation

- Rep. **Scott Peters** (D-CA-50) asked which legislative proposals would be most beneficial for advancing critical mineral recovery.
 - Buckingham endorsed the CHARM Act, the Legacy Mine Cleanup Act of 2025, and the EMRTAI Authorization Act of 2026.

- Rep. **Mariannette Miller-Meeks** (R-IA-01) asked how the CHARM Act could help improve material sorting and processing to better capture value from recycled aluminum and other critical materials.
 - Goldberg said the CHARM Act provides a useful framework for interagency coordination to improvise recovery and processing of critical materials currently treated as waste.
- Guthrie asked if the current interagency coordination process is sufficient or if it needs updating.
 - Buckingham answered that the Legacy Mine Cleanup Act is a very strong step in helping a lead agency streamline coordination.
- Rep. **John Joyce** (R-PA-13) asked how the BRACE Act would improve lithium-ion battery recycling and encourage domestic investment.
 - Klanecky said the bill would provide regulatory clarity and more consistent enforcement, helping attract investment and expand domestic recycling capacity.
- Rep. **Darren Soto** (D-FL-09) asked how the BRACE Act would improve battery recycling systems.
 - Klanecky responded that the bill helps clarify collection, transport, and classification standards for lithium-ion batteries.
- Rep. **Greg Landsman** (D-OH-01) asked how the legislation under consideration could strengthen U.S. critical independence and reduce reliance on China.
 - Buckingham claimed the bills would lower production costs through innovation and more efficient recovery processes, making domestic supply chains more competitive and reducing reliance on foreign processing.
- Rep. **Nanette Barragán** (D-CA-44) asked what safeguards Congress should include to ensure the proposed legislation, including the Legacy Mine Cleanup Act, also delivers meaningful cleanup benefits.
 - Buckingham said existing cleanup safeguards and safety requirements would remain unchanged under the proposed legislation.

Critical Mineral Recovery

- Buckingham noted that abandoned uranium mines are strong candidates for mineral recovery.
- Joyce asked how treating supply waste as an opportunity for recovery will strengthen the critical mineral supply.
 - Buckingham replied that recovering materials from legacy mine waste offers a faster way to increase domestic supply than developing new mines, while putting existing waste resources to productive use.
- Landsman asked how increasing domestic recycling of critical minerals can help reduce costs for consumers and businesses.
 - Dunn stressed that recycling creates a secondary supply of critical minerals that helps stabilize prices and reduce exposure to supply shocks and price volatility.
- Rep. **Rob Menendez** (D-NJ-08) asked how minimum recovery rates improve the environmental and economic outcomes of battery recycling.
 - Dunn said recovery standards ensure key minerals like lithium, nickel, and cobalt are consistently captured regardless of market volatility.

- Palmer confirmed that the U.S. and its allies possess the technology to extract and process rare earth metals and critical minerals at a commercial scale.
- Palmer asked whether the U.S. can recover rare earths and critical materials from magnets, scrap alloys, gallium, and germanium
 - All witnesses agreed that banning such exports would strengthen domestic supply chains and prevent valuable materials and critical minerals from leaving the U.S.

Battery Recycling

- Pallone asked how critical mineral resources found in batteries are currently recycled.
 - Dunn answered that batteries are dismantled, shredded, and the black mass is separated and sent to hydrometallurgy facilities for constituent material removal.
- Tonko asked whether requiring producers to support battery recycling would encourage manufacturers to design batteries that are easier to recycle.
 - Dunn agreed, arguing that producer responsibility incentivizes manufacturers to incorporate recycling costs into battery design, making batteries easier and less expensive to disassemble and recycle.
- Soto asked how lithium-ion batteries should be classified and managed to improve recycling.
 - Klanecky emphasized the need for clearer rules and better public education on proper battery collection and disposal.
- Menendez asked how extended producer responsibility (EPR) can improve electric vehicle (EV) battery recycling and reduce risks from improper disposal.
 - Dunn said EPR places responsibility on producers to ensure the collection and recycling of batteries, improving supply for recyclers while reducing public health and safety risks from improper storage or disposal.

Supply Chain Competition with China

- Rep. **Nick Langworthy** (R-NY-23) asked what the economic impact would be if China significantly restricted exports of critical minerals or critical mineral processing capacity.
 - Klanecky answered that it would have a severe impact across the U.S. economy due to the heavy reliance on imported batteries and materials.
- Palmer asked if the U.S. should ban the export of recyclable e-waste and critical minerals to prevent China from buying them through front companies.
 - Klanecky agreed, emphasizing the urgency with which the U.S. needs to stop subsidizing China's supply chain.
- Landsman asked how cuts to clean energy tax credits and related investments could affect companies working in critical mineral recovery and recycling.
 - Dunn stated that reduced investment in electrification and domestic battery manufacturing would likely cause decreased EV production, which in turn would result in decreased end-of-life battery supply and valuable manufacturing scrap.

Regulatory Reform & Permitting

- Peters asked how investments in innovative critical mineral recovery technologies can strengthen domestic supply chains.

- Buckingham stated that innovative technologies can unlock new domestic sources of critical minerals, but argued that existing federal regulations, primarily under the NRC, have not kept pace.
- Miller-Meeks asked whether current U.S. regulatory assumptions are outdated, given that they were designed to favor disposal rather than recovery of critical minerals.
 - Goldberg said that existing regulations were largely developed before lithium-ion batteries existed and need to be updated to reflect modern recycling and recovery technologies.

EPA Authority

- Rep. **Bob Latta** (R-OH-05) asked how EPA could better incentivize the recovery of critical minerals from contaminated sites and whether existing regulations discourage innovative remediation technologies.
 - Buckingham contended that current regulatory frameworks fail to recognize the value of minerals that incorporate the economic value of recovered minerals into remediation decisions could improve cleanup efforts and make environmental restoration more cost-effective.
- Guthrie asked how EPA determines whether battery recycling materials, such as black mass, are regulated as solid waste.
 - Goldberg explained that EPA's determination depends on the material and how it is managed.
- Joyce argued that directing EPA to develop a national critical mineral recovery strategy would help identify regulatory barriers to mineral recovery
- Langworthy asked what role the EPA could play in recovering critical minerals from waste streams.
 - Goldberg stated that EPA already has regulatory tools under RCRA that could be adapted to support the recovery of critical minerals from waste.