

America First Policy Institute

Former Mississippi Governor Phil Bryant

At a time when global energy systems are being tested by conflict, volatility, and the fragility of distant supply chains, the United States must anchor its strategy in the fundamentals that have always kept this nation strong. The administration has made that clear. President Trump has repeatedly emphasized that a strong domestic energy system is central to an America First strategy, and that begins with refining capacity – the industrial backbone that ensures Americans have the fuels that power our economy, our military, and our daily lives.

It also requires environmental clarity, a priority underscored by EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin, who has emphasized the need for predictable, transparent regulatory pathways that allow operators to invest confidently while meeting high standards. When companies know the rules, they can modernize facilities, improve performance, and deliver cleaner, safer operations without navigating a maze of shifting expectations. Regulatory certainty is not a concession to industry; it is the foundation of responsible, long-term investment.

At the same time, Energy Secretary Chris Wright has highlighted the national-security dimension of energy policy, reminding the country that a stable, Western Hemisphere-based supply chain is no longer optional in a world where chokepoints can be threatened overnight. Energy security is national security and strengthening our refining and midstream infrastructure is essential to ensuring that the United States remains prepared for whatever comes next.

We are already seeing what renewed focus can deliver. The opening of America's first greenfield refinery in nearly 50 years in Brownsville, Texas, marks a historic step forward. The America First Refining facility will add 168,000 barrels per day of capacity and is designed to process 100% American shale oil, keeping this vital resource right here at home and reinforcing the nation's commitment to domestic production.

A second opportunity lies in Port Hamilton Refining and Transportation's facility in St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands. Once the largest refinery in the Western Hemisphere, it was shut down in May 2021. Today, its owners are working closely with the EPA to address legacy environmental issues with the goal of restarting a site capable of producing 180,000 barrels per day. Reviving this asset would strengthen U.S. refining capacity in a strategically located, U.S.-controlled jurisdiction at a moment when global supply chains are under unprecedented strain. Few assets in the Western Hemisphere offer this combination of scale, location, and national-security value.

If America intends to stay strong, competitive, and secure, then we must reinforce the infrastructure, the regulatory certainty, and the workforce that make our energy system possible. The path forward is not about choosing between economic growth, environmental progress, and national security. It is about recognizing that a stable, well-regulated, and strategically positioned refining sector is the foundation of all three. Supporting that foundation is not just good policy – it is a commitment to America's future.