

SPEED UP THE MINING PERMITTING PROCESS

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TOPLINE: Lawmakers should reform the protracted permitting process to boost much-needed domestic production of critical minerals.

BACKGROUND: Minerals are essential to the U.S. economy, from transportation to technology, yet permitting a mine in the U.S. typically takes 7–10 years, compared to 2–3 years in Canada and 1–2 years in Australia. As a result, the number of U.S. metal mines has fallen by about 70% since 1983. And the U.S. is fully dependent on imports for 13 of the minerals that the U.S. Geological Survey designated as critical in 2025 and heavily reliant on imports for 20 others. This is despite the substantial amount of minerals that the U.S. has, like rare earths and lithium. Unfortunately, the mining industry is heavily regulated under numerous federal laws—including the National Environmental Policy Act, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, the Clean Water Act, the Endangered Species Act, and the National Historic Preservation Act—as well as state and local laws.

Action Items (Congress):

- Congress should **reform the slow permitting process for mining projects**. That should include the following reforms:
 - Establish a federal office to oversee and streamline mining permits by **managing coordination among all relevant federal agencies**.
 - Create **enforceable and accelerated deadlines** for mining permits.
 - The presumption should be that the permit *shall be* issued if no decision is made by the deadline.
 - Prohibit **the EPA from using the Clean Water Act to preemptively veto** a project or retroactively veto a lawfully issued permit, as happened with the Pebble Mine in Alaska and Spruce 1 Coal Mine in West Virginia, respectively.

How It Would Make Life More Affordable:

- Increasing domestic production would make the U.S. less vulnerable to Chinese export controls that have driven up prices for key minerals, including bismuth, antimony, and rare earths.
- Minerals are a key part of many everyday products, like smartphones, which contain about eight rare earth metals, and electric vehicles, which use copper, lithium, nickel, manganese, cobalt, graphite, zinc, and rare earths.

Related Legislation: Critical Mineral Dominance Act (H.R. 4090); ESA Amendments Act of 2025 (H.R. 1897); Mining Regulatory Clarity Act (S. 544, H.R. 1366); PERMIT Act (H.R. 3898); Protecting Domestic Mining Act of 2025 (H.R. 1501); SPEED Act (H.R. 4776).

BOTTOMLINE: America can't allow red tape to stand in the way of accessing and utilizing the mineral resources that are imperative to so much modern technology.