

1 Diversified Reporting Services, Inc.

2 RPTS BRENNAN

3 HIF070180

4

5

6 MAXIMIZING OPPORTUNITIES FOR REDEVELOPING BROWNFIELDS SITES:

7 ASSESSING THE POTENTIAL FOR NEW AMERICAN INNOVATION

8 TUESDAY, MARCH 11, 2025

9 House of Representatives,

10 Subcommittee on Environment, Manufacturing,

11 and Critical Materials,

12 Committee on Energy and Commerce,

13 Washington, D.C.

14

15 The subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 10:16 a.m.,

16 Room 2123, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Morgan

17 Griffith [chairman of the subcommittee], presiding.

18

19 Present: Representatives Griffith, Crenshaw, Latta,

20 Carter of Georgia, Joyce, Weber, Pfluger, Miller-Meeks, Lee,

21 Langworthy, Evans, Fedorchak, Guthrie (ex-officio); Tonko,

22 Schakowsky, Ruiz, Peters, Barragan, Soto, Auchincloss, Carter

23 of Louisiana, Menendez, Landsman, and Pallone (ex-officio).

24

25

26 Staff Present: Ansley Boylan, Director of Operations;

27 Jessica Donlon, General Counsel; Emily Hale, Staff Assistant;

28 Christen Harsha, Senior Counsel; Calvin Huggins, Clerk; Megan  
29 Jackson, Staff Director; Daniel Kelly, Press Secretary; Ben  
30 Mullaney, Press Secretary; Kaitlyn Peterson, Policy Analyst;  
31 Jackson Rudden, Staff Assistant; Kaley Stidham, Press  
32 Assistant; Dray Thorne, Director of Information Technology;  
33 Matt VanHyfte, Communications Director; Rasheedah Blackwood,  
34 Minority Intern; Giancarlo Ceja, Minority ENV Fellow; Waverly  
35 Gordon, Minority Deputy Staff Director and General Counsel;  
36 Tiffany Guarascio, Minority Staff Director; Anthony  
37 Gutierrez, Minority Professional Staff Member; Caitlin  
38 Haberman, Minority Staff Director, ENV; Emma Roehrig,  
39 Minority Staff Assistant; Kylea Rogers, Minority Policy  
40 Analyst; Harikrishnan Sanil, Minority Press Intern; Andrew  
41 Souvall, Minority Director of Communications, Outreach, and  
42 Member Services; and Hannah Treger, Minority Intern.

43

44           \*Mr. Griffith. The subcommittee will come to order.

45           The chair recognizes himself for five minutes for an  
46 opening statement.

47           Today this subcommittee will examine implementation of  
48 the Environmental Protection Agency's Brownfields Grant  
49 Program. Brownfields are generally described as properties  
50 that contain or may contain a hazardous substance, pollutant,  
51 or contaminant, which in turn complicates efforts to expand,  
52 redevelop, or reuse the site. Often these contaminated sites  
53 are not redeveloped because prospective new owners are  
54 worried about becoming responsible for potential liability,  
55 as the original company that is liable for the contamination  
56 no longer exists.

57           Through this program EPA provides grant funding to  
58 states, tribes, economic development agencies, and other  
59 entities who are then able to study the extent of  
60 contamination, clean up the site, and find a way to redevelop  
61 it. Since 1993 the EPA has administered efforts to clean up  
62 these sites. Congress first formally established the  
63 Brownfields Program in the Small Business Liability, Relief,  
64 and Brownfields Revitalization Act of 2002, and codified it  
65 under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation,  
66 and Liability Act.

67           The Brownfields Program has traditionally enjoyed  
68 bipartisan support, and the last statutory authorization

69 expired last September at the end of fiscal year 2023.  
70 Reauthorizing this program will provide us with an  
71 opportunity to examine the program and find out what aspects  
72 are working well and what aspects need improvement. I  
73 believe taking testimony from our witnesses today will help  
74 us to inform our efforts.

75         Additionally, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act  
76 provided an unprecedented supplemental appropriation of 1.5  
77 billion for brownfields. The awards, funded under the  
78 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, were exempted from  
79 some of the traditional statutory limitations such as certain  
80 maximum grant amounts and state and the local cost share  
81 requirements. We will need to examine these changes and  
82 understand their advantages and their disadvantages.

83         EPA estimates there are more than 450,000 brownfield  
84 properties in the United States. This amounts to a lot of  
85 unused and \_ or under-utilized land with great economic  
86 potential. Broadly, we also know that we will need  
87 additional infrastructure and facilities to support our  
88 growing economy and process the materials and components  
89 needed for new, innovative technologies.

90         The brownfields program may also be a good tool to help  
91 secure American leadership in emerging industries and  
92 traditional manufacturing. For example, ABI Research, an  
93 industry analysis firm, estimates that by the end of 2025

94     there will be over 6,000 data centers built worldwide as  
95     artificial intelligence continues to take off. Over the next  
96     five years our country's electricity demand is expected to  
97     grow by 16 percent. This growing demand will entail  
98     construction of additional energy resources.

99             So today we will examine opportunities to bring those  
100     industries to brownfield sites in our communities, and  
101     explore existing barriers to put these sites to good use. In  
102     my district in southwest Virginia, county, state agencies,  
103     regional organizations, and public-private partnerships have  
104     already been hard at work revitalizing former mine land for  
105     economic development. I hope we can learn more today about  
106     how the brownfields program can support these endeavors and  
107     similar ones around the country.

108             Thanks to our witnesses for being here and contributing  
109     to these efforts.

110             [The prepared statement of Mr. Griffith follows:]

111

112     \*\*\*\*\*COMMITTEE INSERT\*\*\*\*\*

113

114           \*Mr. Griffith. First we have the Honorable Jim  
115 Connaughton, chief executive officer of James L. Connaughton  
116 Strategies, where he works on sustainable technology,  
117 innovation, and public policy. Mr. Connaughton recently  
118 served as CEO of Nautilus Data Technologies, a company  
119 producing data center components with minimal environmental  
120 impacts. He also served as chairman of the White House  
121 Council on Environmental Quality under President Bush.

122           As you all know, this committee has been engaged in  
123 robust discussion over the past few years on ways to improve  
124 permitting process generally, so we welcome his extensive  
125 experience in this area.

126           We also welcome back Mayor Christian Bollwage. Did I  
127 get that right? All right, from the city of Elizabeth, New  
128 Jersey. The committee greatly appreciates him lending his  
129 knowledge and expertise to our efforts to reauthorize the  
130 brownfields program.

131           We will also hear from Christa Stoneham, president and  
132 CEO of the Houston Land Bank.

133           Thank you for being here today and sharing your insights  
134 on the program and efforts to revitalize the areas your  
135 organization serves.

136           Last but not least, I am excited to recognize and to  
137 welcome my constituent, Duane Miller, executive director of  
138 LENOWISCO Planning District Commission. And if you want a

139 definition of what that is, we will give it to you later.  
140 But my staff and I have had the privilege of working with the  
141 commission for years. They have played an integral role in  
142 attracting emerging industries to our region, creating jobs,  
143 and cleaning up abandoned sites in southwest Virginia.

144 Thank you all for being here, and I look forward to a  
145 good discussion today, and I now recognize the ranking member  
146 of the subcommittee, Mr. Tonko, for his opening statement.

147 \*Mr. Tonko. Well, thank you, Mr. Chair.

148 EPA's brownfields program has enjoyed tremendous  
149 bipartisan support for decades, and I do hope we can continue  
150 to work together to examine and strengthen the program in the  
151 119th Congress. I am certain we all share a love for the  
152 places we have the privilege of representing. And like so  
153 many districts across the country, New York's 20th has an  
154 incredible manufacturing history that is foundational to its  
155 story.

156 Along the Mohawk and Hudson Rivers many mill towns once  
157 thrived. Factories produced carpets, and collars, and  
158 leather products, to name just a few. But sadly, many of  
159 these sites have closed, leaving valuable properties, often  
160 on the waterfront, abandoned or under-utilized. And this too  
161 is part of my district's history.

162 But the story of these former industrial communities  
163 does not need to end here, with blighted properties and years

164 of disinvestment. EPA's brownfields program can be the  
165 catalyst for these communities' comebacks by creating new  
166 economic opportunities that begin with assessing and  
167 remediating former industrial sites. In my district  
168 brownfields funding has led to transformational  
169 revitalizations. Some sites have become new parks, allowing  
170 public access to the waterfront. Others have been prepared  
171 for redevelopment, enabling new employers to move in.

172         And simply put, these success stories would not be  
173 possible without EPA's programs. Since 2002 tens of  
174 thousands of acres of idle land have been made ready for  
175 productive use, increasing property values and local tax  
176 revenue, preserving green fields, and creating jobs. We know  
177 EPA's program has a proven track record of success and  
178 provides effective downpayments. Each dollar spent leverages  
179 more than \$20.

180         And I am incredibly proud that the Infrastructure  
181 Investment and Jobs Act included an historic investment of  
182 some \$1.5 billion for the program for fiscal years 2022  
183 through 2026. These funds include \$1.2 billion for the EPA's  
184 program, and \$300 million for state programs. IIJA also took  
185 important steps to create greater opportunities for  
186 disadvantaged communities by waiving the program's cost \_  
187 cost share requirements and increasing the maximum award  
188 amounts. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses

189 whether the IIJA has been effective, and how Congress can  
190 best build upon those investments.

191 Finally, I want to express my concerns that the Trump  
192 Administration's suggestion that 65 percent of EPA's budget  
193 could be cut. The majority of EPA's funding goes to programs  
194 that state and local governments rely upon. Without a doubt,  
195 a cut of this magnitude will have devastating consequences  
196 for our districts, and I do hope Congress will ensure that  
197 the value of EPA's programs, including the brownfields  
198 program, are properly reflected in our appropriations process  
199 as it moves forward.

200 Because the brownfields program is an incredible  
201 investment of Federal dollars, it enables local governments  
202 to support environmental and economic revitalization by  
203 turning a liability into an opportunity. I hope we can work  
204 together to make certain this program has the resources and  
205 the authorities necessary to continue its great work.

206 [The prepared statement of Mr. Tonko follows:]

207

208 \*\*\*\*\*COMMITTEE INSERT\*\*\*\*\*

209

210           \*Mr. Griffith. With that I would like to yield my  
211 remaining time to our colleague and good friend, Congressman  
212 Menendez, and thank you.

213           \*Mr. Menendez. Thank you, Ranking Member Tonko. I am  
214 honored to welcome Mayor Bollwage to the Energy and Commerce  
215 Committee today to discuss the incredible work being done on  
216 brownfields across the country and back home in New Jersey's  
217 8th congressional district.

218           Mayor Bollwage was first elected as mayor of Elizabeth  
219 in 1992, and has prioritized the redevelopment of brownfield  
220 sites throughout his tenure. He has been recognized for his  
221 role in redeveloping brownfields, and was awarded the  
222 Distinguished Leadership Award for Elected Officials by the  
223 American Planning Association. He is testifying today in his  
224 capacity as chair of the U.S. Conference of Mayors  
225 Brownfields Task Force, a role that he has held for over 20  
226 years.

227           Mayor Bollwage is uniquely qualified to discuss the  
228 importance of reauthorizing the Federal brownfields program,  
229 and has testified at every brownfields hearing this committee  
230 has had. It is an honor to call Mayor Bollwage a friend and  
231 partner, and to recognize the success stories in Elizabeth  
232 that he has overseen.

233           Mayor Bollwage, thank you for your leadership on this  
234 issue. I look forward to hearing your testimony here today.

235           With that I yield back.

236           \*Mr. Griffith. The gentleman yields back. Now I  
237 recognize the chairman of the full committee, Mr. Guthrie,  
238 for five minutes for an opening statement.

239           \*The Chair. Thank you, Chairman Griffith, and Ranking  
240 Member Pallone, and Ranking Member Tonko, my colleagues, and  
241 thank you to our witnesses for being here today.

242           Today we will be examining implementation of EPA's  
243 brownfields program and opportunities to carry on bipartisan  
244 tradition of reauthorizing the program.

245           As you all know, brownfields are contaminated sites or  
246 areas that are suspected of being contaminated. The negative  
247 impact of a brownfield site does not end within the  
248 geographic boundary of the site itself. They can also pose  
249 environmental hazards beyond their borders, and lead to  
250 broader economic downturns in their communities. And  
251 unfortunately, brownfields are found nationwide.

252           Legal liability for existing contamination often  
253 discourages buyers from purchasing properties for  
254 redevelopment out of fear of litigation. Properties then sit  
255 vacant as communities lose the opportunity to improve their  
256 local economy. We have a mandate to ensure our taxpayer  
257 dollars are spent wisely, and part of why we are here today  
258 is to look at how we can improve upon this program moving  
259 forward, and redevelop brownfield sites to support new and

260 emerging industries, potentially even including opportunities  
261 to build state-of-the-art AI data centers.

262         The brownfields program has been successful in aiding  
263 economic development while prioritizing environmental  
264 contamination. Just look at my home state of Kentucky. The  
265 Commonwealth of Kentucky and the historic Fayette County  
266 Courthouse in Lexington was used for over 100 years before  
267 the courts transitioned to a bigger facility. Shortly after  
268 becoming vacant, workers discovered structural defects, water  
269 damage, high levels of lead paint, asbestos, and other  
270 hazardous materials. The public-private partnership between  
271 the developer and the EPA through the brownfields program  
272 made its revitalization possible. This building now houses a  
273 restaurant, visitor center, event space, and a focal point of  
274 the \_ and is a focal point for the community while  
275 maintaining historical integrity.

276         You have major sites like the Hudson Yards in New York  
277 City, which is built on the Long Island Railroad yard. When  
278 completed, Hudson Yards is expected to contribute \$19 billion  
279 per year to the local economy. And I went to school just up  
280 the Palisades Parkway from Elizabeth, and so I consider  
281 northern New Jersey and Manhattan my college town. And my  
282 daughter went to intern a couple of summers ago in New York  
283 City, and I saw the address. She was in a college dorm and  
284 it was near Hudson Yards, adjacent. But I didn't know that

285 it really existed until I moved her in. And I know the  
286 difference between what it was and what it is. So I was  
287 concerned when I saw the neighbors she was moving into, until  
288 I got there and just saw how beautiful and nice it was. And  
289 absolutely, northern New Jersey is just absolutely fantastic,  
290 as well.

291 And so we have other brownfield sites across the country  
292 I know that we are going to talk about today. One in  
293 Indianapolis was a vacant 19th century iron foundry, and it  
294 was given a second chance to make affordable housing.

295 This program also helps us in our mission to expand  
296 nuclear power and restore American energy dominance. In the  
297 118th Congress I was proud to see my bill, the Nuclear for  
298 Brownfield Sites Preparation Act, signed into law as part of  
299 the ADVANCE Act. My bill utilizes existing infrastructure to  
300 lower project costs and further our investments in nuclear  
301 power by allowing nuclear facilities at brownfield sites.

302 The brownfields program has been a bipartisan tradition  
303 here at the Energy and Commerce Committee, and this hearing  
304 today upholds that legacy. I really appreciate our witnesses  
305 for being here, and look forward to hearing what is going on  
306 in your communities.

307

308

309

310           [The prepared statement of Mr. Guthrie follows:]

311

312       \*\*\*\*\*COMMITTEE INSERT\*\*\*\*\*

313

314           \*The Chair. And I look forward to the further  
315 discussion.

316           And Mr. Chair, I yield back.

317           \*Mr. Griffith. The gentleman yields back. I now  
318 recognize the ranking member of the full committee, Mr.  
319 Pallone, for five minutes opening \_ of an opening statement.

320           \*Mr. Pallone. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Let me thank  
321 all of the panel, but I particularly want to thank Mayor  
322 Chris Bollwage, who is, as you know, the chair of the \_ I  
323 guess his official title is chair, U.S. Conference of Mayors  
324 Brownfields Task Force.

325           But I think that kind of, you know, underplays the role  
326 that you have played for so many years in our brownfields  
327 program from the very beginning. And I know you have been a  
328 trusted advisor to me on everything we do at brownfields, so  
329 thank you for all that and for being here today.

330           We are discussing the brownfields program, which  
331 continues to be a shining example of how government can  
332 protect the public health of our communities while also  
333 stimulating economic growth.

334           In 2002 I partnered with the late Representative Paul  
335 Gillmor of Ohio, who chaired the subcommittee at the time, to  
336 write the brownfields law. And over the last 20 years the  
337 brownfields program has consistently enjoyed bipartisan  
338 support, and has been an economic engine for local government

339 and communities looking to turn former contaminated sites  
340 into economic centers and green spaces. And every  
341 congressional district is home to at least one of these  
342 sites.

343       As part of the program, the Federal Government provides  
344 financial help in the form of grants or loans for cleanup,  
345 assessments, and job training so communities can turn  
346 impacted sites into parks, public housing, or new business  
347 centers. And since its inception, more than 40,000 sites  
348 have been revitalized and made ready for development around  
349 the nation, and these revitalization projects leverage nearly  
350 280,000 jobs and more than \$41 billion in economic  
351 development.

352       So this funding really has been a lifeline for  
353 communities. And with the passage of the Bipartisan  
354 Infrastructure Law in 2021, we were able to inject an  
355 additional \$1.5 billion into the brownfields program, and  
356 that increased annual awards by nearly 400 percent to around  
357 \$240 million. Through these funds communities are growing  
358 their economies for the future and creating good-paying jobs.

359       And the brownfields program also benefits public health  
360 and safety by reducing contamination in communities that  
361 couldn't afford to repurpose contaminated sites on their own.  
362 And that is just the beginning. For every dollar the Federal  
363 Government invests in the brownfields program, we get more

364 than \$20 back in economic return, and that showcases the win-  
365 win scenario that the program facilitates.

366 And it is important that we keep all of these benefits  
367 in mind as we look to reauthorize the program before funding  
368 runs out in fiscal year 2026. We must reauthorize and fund  
369 the program to continue to its critical mission, and I  
370 believe that starting these bipartisan conversations early,  
371 Mr. Chairman, is the necessary first step.

372 I hope we can all agree that this program is more than  
373 worth every dollar we put into it, and that we can work  
374 together to provide robust funding moving forward. But what  
375 makes today's hearing unique is the chaotic circumstances in  
376 which we find ourselves. The Trump Administration,  
377 perpetrated by Elon Musk and DOGE, has continued to  
378 recklessly and, I believe, illegally cut staff at Federal  
379 agencies, including those that administer the brownfields  
380 program at the EPA's Office of Land and Emergency Management.

381 These illegal funding freezes have directly impacted the  
382 brownfields program, delaying projects and causing confusion  
383 among grant recipients who are responsible for cleaning up  
384 these sites. The brownfields program protects our  
385 communities and revitalizes our local economies, and we owe  
386 it to all of our constituents to figure out a path forward,  
387 ensuring funding is delivered. It is crucial that any  
388 discussion of the future of the brownfields program builds on

389 the program's economic and community success while  
390 recognizing the need for dedicated Federal staff to  
391 administer it.

392 [The prepared statement of Mr. Pallone follows:]

393

394 \*\*\*\*\*COMMITTEE INSERT\*\*\*\*\*

395

396           \*Mr. Pallone. So I thank you again, Mr. Chairman, and  
397 with that I yield back.

398           \*Mr. Griffith. The gentleman yields back, and I  
399 appreciate that. We now conclude with member opening  
400 statements. The chair would like to remind members that,  
401 pursuant to the committee rules, all members' opening  
402 statements will be made a part of the record.

403           We want to thank our witnesses for taking the time to  
404 testify before the subcommittee. Although it is not the  
405 practice of this subcommittee to swear in witnesses, I would  
406 remind our witnesses that knowingly and willfully making  
407 material false statements to the legislative branch is  
408 against the law under title 18, section 1001 of the United  
409 States Code.

410           You will have an opportunity to give an opening  
411 statement, followed by questions from members. That said, we  
412 will now begin our opening statements and our first witness  
413 will be Mr. Connaughton.

414           You are recognized for five minutes.

415

416 STATEMENT OF THE HON. JAMES L. CONNAUGHTON, CHIEF EXECUTIVE  
417 OFFICER, JLC STRATEGIES, LLC; J. CHRISTIAN BOLLWAGE, MAYOR OF  
418 ELIZABETH, NEW JERSEY, CHAIR, U.S. CONFERENCE OF MAYORS  
419 BROWNFIELDS TASK FORCE; DUANE MILLER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,  
420 LENOWISCO PLANNING DISTRICT COMMISSION; AND CHRISTA D.  
421 STONEHAM, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER & PRESIDENT, HOUSTON LAND  
422 BANK

423

424 STATEMENT OF JAMES L. CONNAUGHTON

425

426       \*Mr. Connaughton. Good morning, Chairman Griffith,  
427 Ranking Member Tonko, and members of the subcommittee. My  
428 name is Jim Connaughton. I am a technology entrepreneur, a  
429 policy entrepreneur, and an innovation infrastructure  
430 developer.

431       I have spent the better part of my professional life in  
432 and around brownfields, and I was privileged to be with Mayor  
433 Bollwage at the signing of the Brownfields Act in 2001 in  
434 Conshohocken, Pennsylvania.

435       Growing our economy to meet the needs of a thriving  
436 population and national security will require a doubling or  
437 even a tripling of infrastructure over the next 25 years.  
438 That means hundreds of thousands of new projects. The  
439 hundreds of thousands of America's brownfields are the best  
440 place to start driving innovation, unleashing prosperity, and

441 revitalizing our communities.

442       My written testimony highlights five priority areas of  
443 American industrial innovation, where brownfields are ideal:  
444 data centers, semiconductor manufacturing, submarine and ship  
445 building, energy production, and plastics recycling. During  
446 Q&A I hope to be able to talk about my own successful, albeit  
447 challenging, eight-year saga developing innovative AI data  
448 center infrastructure at two brownfields in the State of  
449 California and many others. My testimony today, however, is  
450 going to focus on the critical barriers to success of  
451 brownfield projects, the prolonged delays in approving site  
452 assessments, environmental permits, and connections to the  
453 electricity grid. These delays either kill brownfield  
454 projects or needlessly make them two to three times more  
455 expensive than they need to be.

456       Whether your objective is growing the economy,  
457 sustaining U.S. technology leadership, strengthening national  
458 security, addressing the energy emergency, or confronting  
459 climate change, fully achieving these objectives is  
460 procedurally impossible. I will highlight four policies to  
461 enable immediate and lower-cost project development. These  
462 policies eliminate process and litigation barriers while  
463 preserving compliance with our nation's environmental  
464 protection laws.

465       The first speed bump for projects happens when agencies

466 delay signing off on the environmental site assessments used  
467 to clear brownfield sites for reuse. This work is now  
468 performed quickly and cost effectively by credentialed  
469 private-sector experts using well-established methods  
470 developed over 30 years and tens of thousands of projects.  
471 Congress should authorize an automatic sign-off process for  
472 certified third-party expert site assessments.

473         The second major delay happens during environmental  
474 permitting. I am recommending that Congress legislate a  
475 permit-by-rule approach that I call Approve, Build, and  
476 Comply, or ABC. The legislation would categorically approve  
477 a list of pre-cleared locations and pre-cleared types of  
478 critical infrastructure projects in lieu of further  
479 permitting. Such projects would still have to comply with  
480 substantive environmental regulations, and any non-compliance  
481 would still remain subject to enforcement. These pre-cleared  
482 locations would include areas that federal, state, and tribal  
483 law have already prioritized, such as brownfields,  
484 opportunity zones, energy communities, shipyards, and  
485 existing rights of way.

486         The third delay factor, of course, is NEPA and its state  
487 equivalents. The solution is to refocus NEPA reviews on  
488 unquantified environmental impacts as the original 1970 law  
489 provides. Since 1970, hundreds of Federal, state, local, and  
490 tribal laws have been enacted, all of which quantify most

every environmental impact in thousands of implementing regulations and technical documents. Congress should clarify that any environmental impacts that are regulated or managed under another law do not require redundant analysis and evaluation under NEPA. We still get full coverage, but we eliminate the redundancy.

Finally, new infrastructure faces a five-year delay and a massive backlog preventing connection to the electricity grid. Imagine if that was your home, your school, or your hospital. Five years before you can connect to the grid. Congress should set a six-month limit on interconnection decisions and direct the FERC and DoE to work with system operators to implement automated technology solutions for three years. We have the hardware, we have the software. We just need to invest to make it happen.

With these initiatives, brownfields can happen starting tomorrow, and we can move from thousands of sites redeveloped to hundreds of thousands of sites redeveloped, and it will be the foundation of the future of our economy.

Thank you for your consideration, and I will look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Connaughton follows:]

\*\*\*\*\*COMMITTEE INSERT\*\*\*\*\*

516           \*Mr. Griffith. Thank you, sir. Now I recognize Mr.  
517 Bollwage, Mayor, for your five-minute opening \_ or opening  
518 statement.  
519

520 STATEMENT OF J. CHRISTIAN BOLLWAGE

521

522 \*Mr. Bollwage. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman  
523 Griffith, I appreciate it.

524 Ranking Member Tonko, it is good to see you again.

525 And thank you very much, Congressman Menendez and  
526 Congressman Pallone, for your kind words.

527 I have been before this committee, Chairman, numerous  
528 times since the 1990s on the topic of brownfields, and I  
529 represent the U.S. Conference of Mayors. But I would like  
530 the committee to know that we are also working closely with  
531 the National League of Cities and the National Association of  
532 Counties on this important issue.

533 I also want to thank this committee for incorporating  
534 our recommendations into the brownfields law in 2018,  
535 including the multi-purpose grants, the increasing of the  
536 cleanup grant amounts, and we were very pleased at that time  
537 to see additional funding of \$1.5 billion that \_ and the  
538 higher funding caps that were included in the Infrastructure  
539 Investment and Jobs Act.

540 Previous testimony, cities have been doing brownfields,  
541 as all of you know, for years. But we have hit roadblocks on  
542 those efforts. And the legislation that you mentioned in  
543 your opening remarks, Chairman, in 2002 was a game-changer on  
544 many of those roadblocks, providing liability protections for

545 innocent parties, codified the brownfields program, and made  
546 a difference throughout many communities in this entire  
547 country.

548         The results are impressive. For every Federal dollar  
549 that are awarded in this brownfields program, \$20.45 has been  
550 leveraged, 13.9 jobs were leveraged per \$100,000 of EPA  
551 funding. The only downside is, you know, Mr. Chairman and  
552 members of this committee, are that the grant applications  
553 far outnumber the resources that are available.

554         And although many of the easier-to-develop brownfield  
555 field sites have been tackled, communities still struggle to  
556 develop more difficult sites. The changes that were  
557 incorporated in the 2018 reauthorization bill, as well as the  
558 Jobs Act have assisted with cleanup and redevelopment of more  
559 complex sites.

560         EPA brownfields has consistently been one of the most  
561 useful Federal programs at the local level, and it is a  
562 bipartisan program supported by Congress.

563         Brownfields are a neighborhood eyesore that the  
564 neighborhood sees. But for cities, they represent unutilized  
565 potential. We see redevelopment as a chance to create jobs,  
566 revitalize neighborhoods, increase the tax base, and  
567 reutilize existing infrastructure.

568         I want to thank Congress for the \_ including 1.5 billion  
569 in brownfields redevelopment in the Job Acts [sic], as well

570 as providing higher grant levels.

571 EPA was hesitant towards larger grants because they only  
572 had \$90 million. However, with the increased funding and  
573 additional flexibility, EPA provided larger grant amounts of  
574 \$500,000 for assessments and 5 million for cleanups. In my  
575 community we have developed the Jersey Gardens, the Harbor  
576 Front Villas, Elizabeth Port HOPE VI, and they are all  
577 included in my written testimony.

578 The former landfill became a 200-acre shopping  
579 experience. A former industrial waterfront is now home to  
580 mixed-use development that includes luxury homes as well as  
581 affordable housing. This is what the great brownfield \_ the  
582 brownfields program is all about. Each community is  
583 different. They have their own needs and their own vision,  
584 and the program provides them with the tools they need.

585 Regarding the next reauthorization bill, we would like  
586 to recommend, on behalf of the Conference of Mayors,  
587 naturally, additional levels of funding of 250 to 300 million  
588 per year for the next 5 years; multi-purpose grant programs,  
589 increasing the grant amounts to 5 to 10 million \_ we would  
590 also ask the EPA to allow the broadest application of the  
591 area to cover these grants; support of our original  
592 recommendation of increasing the cleanup grant cap to 1  
593 million, with the flexibility to go up to 10 million in  
594 certain instances; raise the administrative caps to a higher

595 level, this will help smaller communities; and finally, we  
596 would like to work with you to develop recommendations on  
597 potential tools that can be implemented.

598       The changes that Congress has made in the last  
599 reauthorization bill improve the program. And significantly,  
600 the Jobs Act built on that progress. Our organizations are  
601 asking Congress for a simple reauthorization package with  
602 change in the effective dates. But if possible, we ask for  
603 additional resources such as those that were allocated in the  
604 Jobs Act.

605       This is a program that I think all of us are proud of,  
606 where \_ whatever side of the aisle, and I urge this committee  
607 for reauthorization.

608       Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for this opportunity.

609       [The prepared statement of Mr. Bollwage follows:]

610

611       \*\*\*\*\*COMMITTEE INSERT\*\*\*\*\*

612

613           \*Mr. Griffith. I thank the gentleman, and now recognize  
614   Ms. Stoneham for her five-minute opening statement.  
615

616 STATEMENT OF CHRISTA D. STONEHAM

617

618       \*Ms. Stoneham. Chairman Griffith, Ranking Member Tonko,  
619 and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the  
620 opportunity to testify today.

621       As chief executive officer and president of the Houston  
622 Land Bank, America's largest geographic land bank, our  
623 mission as a quasi-governmental non-profit is to turn vacant,  
624 abandoned, and under-utilized properties into thriving  
625 community assets. However, I also serve as a steering  
626 committee member for the National Brownfields Coalition and a  
627 board member for the Center for Community Progress, both  
628 organizations dedicated to ensuring that brownfields are  
629 opportunities for redevelopment and economic progress.

630       As the energy capital of the world, Houston is on track  
631 to become the third-largest city in the United States. Yet  
632 hundreds of brownfields and acres remain barriers to housing,  
633 jobs, and economic prosperity. But unlike many major cities,  
634 Houston has no zoning laws, meaning that industrial sites  
635 often sit directly next to homes, schools, and community  
636 centers. This creates health and safety risks, drives down  
637 property values, and makes redevelopment complicated,  
638 especially when absentee landlords, legal barriers, and  
639 contamination costs prevent private investment from stepping  
640 in. But that is where land banks step up. We take on the

641 toughest properties, the ones that market won't touch, and  
642 position them for community-driven revitalization. But we  
643 can't do this work alone.

644         One example of Federal support in action is Project  
645 Yellow Cab, a 6.8-acre brownfield site in Houston's near  
646 north side. Once a vital transportation hub, the former taxi  
647 headquarters quickly became an illegal landfill, a crime  
648 hotspot, and an environmental hazard. But since 2019 the  
649 Houston Land Bank has secured \$5 million in local government  
650 grants for site acquisition, leveraged \$7.3 million in ARPA  
651 funds to gain full site control with Harris County,  
652 demolished abandoned warehouses, and prepared the land for  
653 redevelopment. But most importantly, we partnered with the  
654 community to plan 40 affordable single family homes and 120  
655 affordable multi-family units. In addition, we secured over  
656 \$200,000 to ensure these homes are energy efficient and  
657 disaster-ready, a critical need in Houston, where storms and  
658 hurricanes are a constant threat.

659         But Project Yellow Cab is just one example of a bigger  
660 need. To expand our impact we also secured a \$600,000  
661 assessment grant for over 40 acres to conduct infrastructure  
662 analysis, facilitate reuse planning, and to engage community  
663 leaders, environmental experts, and policy-makers to drive  
664 new funding and partnerships. Today we are working with a  
665 \$500,000 city wide brownfield assessment grant and a \$5

666 million cleanup grant to transform a 60-year abandoned trash  
667 incinerator site into a public green space.

668 But without sustained Federal investment, these projects  
669 and many like them may never happen. Land banks across the  
670 country rely on governmental partnerships to take on sites  
671 that private developers cannot do alone. But we need  
672 continued success in order to align with Congress to ensure  
673 long-term funding stability; expand eligibility for small,  
674 community-driven projects; strengthen public-private  
675 partnerships; and expand reuse planning support.

676 Because at Houston Land Bank we don't see brownfields as  
677 problems; we see them as possibilities, homes where families  
678 can build wealth, parks where children can play, and  
679 storefronts where businesses can grow. But this progress  
680 depends on sustained Federal investment. Houston, like so  
681 many cities, cannot afford to lose a single square foot of  
682 opportunity. We have the tools, we have the partnerships, we  
683 have the momentum. Now we need the resources to amplify our  
684 mission.

685 Thank you for your time and service and attention. I  
686 welcome any questions you may have.

687 [The prepared statement of Ms. Stoneham follows:]

688

689 \*\*\*\*\*COMMITTEE INSERT\*\*\*\*\*

690

691           \*Mr. Griffith. I thank you so much, and now recognize  
692   Mr. Miller for his five-minute opening statement.  
693

694 STATEMENT OF DUANE MILLER

695

696       \*Mr. Miller. Good morning, Chairman Griffith, Vice  
697 Chairman Crenshaw, Ranking Member Tonko, and Ranking Member  
698 Pallone. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today on the  
699 critical role of EPA's brownfields program in revitalizing  
700 rural coal communities.

701       I represent voices from the communities of southwest  
702 Virginia that have powered this nation for generations, towns  
703 built around coal mines, processing plants, and industries  
704 that once thrived but have since faced economic downturn and  
705 environmental challenges. The brownfields program is a  
706 lifeline for these communities. It transforms once  
707 contaminated, under-utilized properties into productive sites  
708 for economic development, public use, and community  
709 restoration. The program does not just clean up land, it  
710 restores hope, attracts investment, and paves the way for a  
711 new economic future.

712       One of the most significant benefits of the brownfields  
713 program is its role in economic development. Rural, coal-  
714 impacted communities often struggle to attract new businesses  
715 due to environmental concerns tied to former mining and  
716 industrial sites. Brownfields funding changes that equation.  
717 By assessing and remediating contamination, these sites \_  
718 often the only developable flat acreage in a locality of very

719 mountainous and sloped terrain \_ become viable locations for  
720 manufacturers, small businesses, and even a plethora of  
721 possible renewable energy and data center projects. We have  
722 seen direct results. For every Federal dollar invested in  
723 brownfields cleanup, communities see an average return of \$20  
724 in economic development activity. Also, it is estimated that  
725 brownfields redevelopment creates over 10 jobs per \$100,000  
726 spent, jobs that stay in the community and provide  
727 opportunities for displaced coal workers and younger  
728 generations alike.

729       Beyond job creation, brownfields funding enables rural  
730 communities to repurpose land for critical infrastructure  
731 projects. Many former coal-related sites are being  
732 transformed into modern industrial parks, and \_ it is our  
733 hope \_ future housing developments to meet growing community  
734 needs. Without this Federal support, many of these sites  
735 would remain abandoned, limiting the region's ability to  
736 attract new residents, industry, and businesses.

737       The brownfields program is not just about industrial  
738 economic growth, it is also about promoting the resurgence of  
739 downtown communities. Many downtown districts' brownfield  
740 sites contain legacy contaminants that pose risks.  
741 Brownfields funding allows localities to clean up these sites  
742 and create prime locations for downtown district resurgence,  
743 further improving the livability and quality of life in these

744 communities.

745       Many rural dependent communities are seeking ways to  
746 diversify their economies while maintaining their identity.  
747 Brownfields funding is playing a critical role in repurposing  
748 former mine land and industrial sites for new energy data  
749 center development, including battery storage facilities and  
750 even small modular reactor possibilities to meet ever-growing  
751 domestic data center development power needs.

752       I am thankful for Chairman Griffith, as well as Governor  
753 Youngkin, for making SMR and energy generation priority in  
754 our region. LENOWISCO, the agency I work for, completed an  
755 SMR site feasibility study and identified seven possible  
756 sites. Six of those seven were brownfield locations. I also  
757 would note all seven of those locations scored very high in  
758 the siting tool for advanced nuclear development, the STAND  
759 requirement.

760       These projects align with Federal and state goals for  
761 energy security, while ensuring that rural areas remain key  
762 players in America's emerging data center and energy future.  
763 The EPA's brownfield program is one of the most successful  
764 examples for Federal investment sparking local  
765 revitalization. It empowers rural communities to turn  
766 environmental liabilities into economic assets.

767       In my experience, when a former coal site is cleaned up  
768 and put back into productive use, it does more than remove

769 contamination. It restores local pride, creates economic  
770 opportunity, and provides a pathway for the next generation  
771 to stay and thrive in their hometowns.

772 I urge this committee to continue its support for the  
773 brownfields program, ensuring that rural, coal-impacted  
774 communities have the resources needed to reclaim their land,  
775 rebuild their economies, and create a more sustainable  
776 future.

777 Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

778 [The prepared statement of Mr. Miller follows:]

779

780 \*\*\*\*\*COMMITTEE INSERT\*\*\*\*\*

781

782           \*Mr. Griffith. Thank you very much, and I thank all of  
783 our witnesses. We will now begin questioning by the members.

784           I would ask that members remember not to ask a new  
785 question to our witnesses just as your five minutes is  
786 expiring. We do have \_ yes, that happens. We do have the  
787 opportunity for you to submit written questions for the  
788 record subsequent to the hearing, and I would encourage you  
789 to do so.

790           That being said, I will now recognize myself for five  
791 minutes.

792           Mr. Miller, Duane, as you know, I represent a large  
793 district. It is larger than nine states by land mass. And  
794 so while today we are focusing on LENOWISCO and the southwest  
795 corner with the mines and so forth of the district, I have  
796 brownfields in all of the 28 different geopolitical  
797 subdivisions that I represent, from Martinsville to  
798 Pennington Gap and Lee County, which is part of your service  
799 area. And it is \_ from those two locations, it is about 220  
800 miles, no matter where you are in the district, to get from  
801 one side to the other. It is about four hours and so many  
802 minutes, depending on exactly where you are located. So I  
803 don't want to \_ it is not that we are ignoring them, it is  
804 just that I couldn't focus on everybody.

805           But I am proud to have you here talking about the work  
806 that you have done in the LENOWISCO area. Could you talk

807 more about how your organization has successfully utilized  
808 the brownfields grant program in our part of Virginia? And I  
809 know in your testimony you mentioned Project Intersection, so  
810 you may want to get into that.

811 Mike.

812 \*Mr. Miller. Sure, Mr. Chairman. Yes, Project  
813 Intersection actually is on a brownfield site in the City of  
814 Norton in Virginia.

815 As the chairman mentioned, I would say probably 80  
816 percent of any acreage we have in the district where I work  
817 that is more than 5 to 10 acres is going to be some form of a  
818 brownfield site. If it is something that can't be developed,  
819 it is because of the slope or the mountainous terrain that is  
820 in the region where we are.

821 Project Intersection was an abandoned mine land site,  
822 and we were able to develop those 200 acres into a industrial  
823 park just over the last 5 years, utilizing brownfield money  
824 for assessment in the early stages, and then able to turn  
825 those funds into AMLER funding through OSM.

826 \*Mr. Griffith. And AMLER is Abandoned Mine Land  
827 Economic Revitalization. That is a separate program from  
828 your traditional abandoned mine land program, correct?

829 \*Mr. Miller. Correct.

830 \*Mr. Griffith. All right.

831 \*Mr. Miller. And it is a wonderful program.

832           \*Mr. Griffith. Yes, it is.

833           \*Mr. Miller. Yes, we have certainly utilized that  
834 program and secured over \$30 million to develop that  
835 industrial park, and also have recruited two prospects that,  
836 at full capacity, will have 350 jobs within our region.  
837 Three hundred and fifty jobs may not sound like a whole lot  
838 to some of the Members or members of the committee here, but  
839 350 jobs in our region is what we like to refer to as a big  
840 lick. So we are really happy to be able to do that.

841           \*Mr. Griffith. And you couldn't have done that without  
842 several programs, but particularly also the brownfields  
843 program. Is that correct?

844           \*Mr. Miller. Absolutely. There is really no  
845 development we can do, whether it is in downtown districts or  
846 larger economic development projects within our region,  
847 without reaching into the brownfield pot in one form or  
848 another, whether it is an assessment or actual  
849 implementation.

850           \*Mr. Griffith. All right. Can you tell us what  
851 barriers, if any, your organization has faced in receiving  
852 and making use of cleanup grants and revolving loan fund  
853 grants?

854           \*Mr. Miller. The biggest issue, and what I would like  
855 to leave with you all today in terms of that, is what can we  
856 do for redevelopment? The brownfield money is wonderful for

857 assessment. It is also wonderful for cleanup. But in rural,  
858 small areas like where we are, with an aging population and,  
859 of course, a dropping tax basis is \_ with that older  
860 demographic \_ is where can we find the funds for  
861 redevelopment?

862 I mean, we struggle to find the funds just for the  
863 assessment. And what we have had to do is pool a lot of our  
864 localities together, go to EPA for a collaboration fund  
865 grant, and then use those funds. Because our communities \_  
866 you remember some of our towns \_ I am fortunate to work for  
867 15 towns, 1 city, and 3 counties. And we have, actually, the  
868 smallest town in the Commonwealth of Virginia, Duffield,  
869 which has 50 residents, going up to our largest town of those  
870 15, which is about 3,500. So very rural, small area.

871 So, you know, we will get \_ I kind of like \_ I won't use  
872 an analogy, but we really don't have the funds in our small  
873 localities to really get past \_ we will do \_ or we will do,  
874 you know, the assessment, and then we will get into the  
875 cleanup on implementation. But there is really nothing to go  
876 that next step in redevelopment. I am not asking for EPA and  
877 brownfields to fund all of that, but maybe some type of  
878 matching program, where you could access some of those funds  
879 in the form of a grant for redevelopment of some of those  
880 areas. And again, not 100 percent by any means, but at least  
881 something that we could do.

882           And I would be remiss if I didn't plug, too, certainly  
883 anything we could do that would help specifically coal-  
884 reliant communities, I think, would be wonderful.

885           \*Mr. Griffith. I appreciate that. And you mentioned  
886 Duffield, and I am out of time so I will just say that  
887 Duffield has a lot of brown sites \_ brownfield sites, even  
888 though it only is a town of \_ how many people, did you say?

889           \*Mr. Miller. There's 50 in Duffield.

890           \*Mr. Griffith. All right, I appreciate it.

891           \*Mr. Miller. Well, 54 to 50 in the last census.

892           \*Mr. Griffith. I yield back and now recognize Mr.  
893 Tonko, the ranking member, for his five minutes of questions.

894           \*Mr. Tonko. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the  
895 witnesses again. I absolutely want this program to be able  
896 to continue working, and working effectively. And after the  
897 enactment of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act we  
898 have some new data points that Congress might want to  
899 consider for adjusting the program moving forward.

900           So, Mayor Bollwage, which do you and the local  
901 government groups you are representing believe that those  
902 IIJA funds have been used effectively?

903           \*Mr. Bollwage. When we can get them, yes.

904           \*Mr. Tonko. And, Ms. Stoneham, do you or any of the  
905 other witnesses share the view that the IIJA has resulted in  
906 Federal dollars being well utilized?

907           \*Ms. Stoneham. Absolutely. It provided an opportunity  
908 to work directly with the communities to imagine what they  
909 would like to see, and then directly implement the solution,  
910 as well.

911           \*Mr. Tonko. Okay. Anyone else on that?

912           [No response.]

913           \*Mr. Tonko. Those IIJA dollars included some tweaks to  
914 the program's requirements. Mayor Bollwage, I know you have  
915 made the point that many of the easier brownfields have  
916 already been addressed through the program, which has left  
917 sites that are more complex, costly, or otherwise less  
918 attractive for redevelopment. But, of course, those sites  
919 also deserve the chance to spark a locally-driven  
920 revitalization effort. Those IIJA dollars sought to address  
921 this by increasing the maximum award amount. Mr. Mayor, was  
922 this an effective policy change to better address more  
923 complex sites?

924           \*Mr. Bollwage. Yes, Mr. \_ Vice Chairman \_ Ranking  
925 Member. It helps in a way that it affords flexibility for  
926 the municipalities, and that is the important part of that  
927 question.

928           \*Mr. Tonko. Thank you. And did EPA strike the right  
929 balance between award amounts and the overall number of  
930 awards?

931           \*Mr. Bollwage. It depends on the municipality. It

932 could work, the balance. In my city it has always worked.

933 \*Mr. Tonko. And do other witnesses have an opinion on  
934 the merits of larger award amounts?

935 Mr. Connaughton.

936 \*Mr. Connaughton. Yes, Ranking Member Tonko. The  
937 projects I have been \_ I am focused on are these big  
938 innovation infrastructure projects, which tend to be larger,  
939 and be a \_ have a much more complex physical infrastructure,  
940 but then have all these spillover effects into then the  
941 smaller brownfields that will support them and supply them.  
942 So think of building submarines in Mobile, Alabama. You have  
943 the big redevelopment that occurs just at the facility for  
944 building, but then you have all these zones around the  
945 shipyard that can now be restored and redeveloped. So it is  
946 a combination of anchor, and then lots of lots of smaller  
947 supporting. And now you could have a systematic  
948 redevelopment that brings lots of value to the community.

949 \*Mr. Tonko. Thank you. The bipartisan brownfields  
950 reauthorization that was recently marked up by the Senate EPW  
951 Committee also included a statutory increase to the maximum  
952 award amount. And while the Senate hasn't gone as far as the  
953 IIJA's maximum awards, the inclusion of this provision is an  
954 acknowledgment that some future sites may require additional  
955 flexibility in the size of awards.

956 Mayor Bollwage, based on the IIJA experience, is this a

957 change we should consider in the program's reauthorization?

958       \*Mr. Bollwage. We believe the new money that is being  
959 provided by the Jobs Act is utilized and justify any  
960 appropriations in the future. Higher funding levels are,  
961 naturally, extremely important and could be included in this  
962 new authorization bill.

963       \*Mr. Tonko. Thank you for that.

964       And from our other witnesses, any comments on that  
965 effort being made?

966       \*Mr. Miller. I would have to agree. And anything we  
967 could do to raise the amount. And one of the things \_ again,  
968 I am in a very rural location, you know, so some of our  
969 projects may be as simple as redevelopment of an old school  
970 building, not a high cost in terms of the grand scheme of  
971 things. But then we are also focusing now on really trying  
972 to take some of this rural property that is in a remote area,  
973 and market it for data centers and also small modular  
974 reactors and looking at other energy projects.

975       And as most of you all know, when you are talking about  
976 data centers or small modular reactors, you are talking about  
977 huge price tags. So anything we could do to increase a \_ I  
978 think we would certainly ask.

979       \*Mr. Tonko. Okay. Ms. Stoneham, I think you wanted to  
980 say something, too.

981       \*Ms. Stoneham. Yes, the \$5 million cleanup grant for

982 the trash incinerator that I mentioned was the largest in our  
983 region. If we had more dollars, we could have considered  
984 additional uses outside of a green space, considering the  
985 site currently has over 40 feet of incinerator ash currently  
986 on that site. So if we had a larger funding amount, then  
987 maybe we can incorporate other community benefits, but we  
988 were very grateful to receive that grant award to produce  
989 that result.

990 \*Mr. Tonko. Okay. With seconds remaining, I heard the  
991 chair earlier today, so with that I will yield back.

992 How is that for support?

993 \*Mr. Griffith. Absolutely. I thank the gentleman and  
994 now recognize Mr. Crenshaw for his five minutes of questions.

995 \*Mr. Crenshaw. Well, thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank  
996 you all for being here.

997 Thank you, Ms. Stoneham, for being here and telling us  
998 about some of these successful brownfield site cleanups in  
999 our hometown of Houston. Before I get to Mr. Connaughton on  
1000 a few other questions, on some of these Houston-based  
1001 projects, you know, in your testimony, you stated that the  
1002 initial brownfield grant of, I think, \$600,000 opened up \$13  
1003 million. But does \_ but I \_ but when we look at those, those  
1004 are also mostly EPA \_ well, mostly Federal funding that it  
1005 opened up.

1006 Where is \_ where does the state come in in projects like

1007 these? I saw some from City of Houston. Does the \_ what is  
1008 the state agency that would be matching or cost sharing?

1009 \*Ms. Stoneham. So currently we have not had any  
1010 matches, match requirements, or received any direct funds  
1011 from the state. Now, we did coordinate with the TCQ in terms  
1012 of the compliance and the reporting and the testing, but we  
1013 did not receive any funding as of yet.

1014 \*Mr. Crenshaw. Okay. I was just curious. Thank you.

1015 Mr. Connaughton, you mentioned many ways to make this  
1016 just a more efficient process in general. Could you maybe  
1017 elaborate on that, and on ways to increase private investment  
1018 interest in brownfield sites, and also just the efficiency of  
1019 the program, and permitting, and just getting it going? We  
1020 keep hearing this stuff in terms of years. How do we make  
1021 those months?

1022 \*Mr. Connaughton. Yes. So many of the projects that  
1023 have been in the program are smaller, more \_ located near  
1024 cities, rebuilding communities. And, you know, we are  
1025 talking about grants and the 1 to 10 million. What I want to  
1026 talk about is the opposite of funding. These \_ those are  
1027 what I call assess to attract. So you are funding to clear  
1028 the site so hopefully somebody will develop it in the future.  
1029 What I want to talk about is attract to assess, where there  
1030 is not an outlay of money.

1031 The main obstacle to building out large innovation

1032 infrastructure \_ and I have lived it, and have the successes  
1033 and the scars to prove it \_ the main obstacle is speed to  
1034 project completion. So if I know I am going to build a \$200  
1035 million data center project, which I have done, and I know  
1036 that I can actually turn it on in under two years, which is  
1037 impossible, I will pay anything to assess the site to make it  
1038 clean for redevelopment. Okay? That will be on my budget.  
1039 But if I am looking at a brownfield, and it is \_ I am not  
1040 sure of its assessment status, and I don't know if I can get  
1041 my permits, and I don't know that I can build, my project is  
1042 going to cost two to three times more, right? I am going to  
1043 have all this uncertainty, and I am not going to get my  
1044 investors or my insurers to sign off.

1045       So the biggest risk to brownfield redevelopment are all  
1046 the projects that never get built that we don't talk about,  
1047 okay, because they die on the vine. That is why these  
1048 permitting reforms are so vital. And I want to underline I  
1049 am not talking about changing any environmental standards; I  
1050 am just talking about reversing the process step like we do  
1051 in most other sectors, which is let's let developers with  
1052 their third-party experts actually build and be subject to an  
1053 enforcement for non-compliance, which, by the way, in the  
1054 modern age almost never happens now. The rules are strict.  
1055 The enforcement is harsh. You know, you have huge damages,  
1056 liabilities.

1057           So the beauty of rebuilding in a brownfield is you can  
1058   take that brownfield and turn it into an environmental  
1059   greenfield. And that is why you can support all these  
1060   activities. But you need this \_ it is a three-legged stool,  
1061   and the three-legged stool is you have got to get the site  
1062   assessments cleared fast. Okay? I can pay my expert to do  
1063   it in, you know, weeks \_ actually, months. But then I sit  
1064   around and wait for a year-and-a-half for the government  
1065   clearance. Right? I can do all my NEPA. I did a NEPA in  
1066   California. We did it in three months, and it took me three-  
1067   and-a-half years to get it signed off on. I mean, that is  
1068   nuts.

1069           And then the environmental permits, once I was finally  
1070   able to apply for them, which I couldn't do until my NEPA was  
1071   done, okay, that took another year, right? You know, my  
1072   project is now three times more than it was, very hard to,  
1073   especially as a startup, to get investment.

1074           So if we don't go after all of these pieces, they run in  
1075   parallel. Any one doesn't solve the problem.

1076           \*Mr. Crenshaw. And when you testify about automatic  
1077   sign-off processes, is that what you are talking about?

1078           \*Mr. Connaughton. Yes, we do that in so many other  
1079   sectors, you know, where we have third-party certified  
1080   professionals signing off to government-set standards. In  
1081   the brownfield program, I mean, the mayor and others have

1082 created a 30-year record of how to do this right. We know  
1083 how to do it, we have the practices, we have the standards.  
1084 We know what is clean, we know what is not clean. The  
1085 remediation methods are really well established.

1086 So where all of this is well established, we just \_ we  
1087 should just have a process where the professionals sign off,  
1088 and then they can be inspected and reviewed, you know, if  
1089 they screw up. But it almost never happens anymore.

1090 \*Mr. Crenshaw. Got it. Thank you. That is an  
1091 interesting thing for the committee to think about as we look  
1092 at reauthorization.

1093 I yield back.

1094 \*Mr. Griffith. I thank the gentleman for yielding back.  
1095 I now recognize Mr. Pallone, the chair \_ ranking member of  
1096 the full committee, for his five minutes of questions.

1097 \*Mr. Pallone. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Let me go to  
1098 Mayor Bollwage.

1099 In your testimony you say \_ and I quote \_ "It will never  
1100 be a bad investment to put more money into this program.''  
1101 Obviously, I agree. But as we start to think about  
1102 reauthorizing brownfields, what authorization levels should  
1103 we consider for the program?

1104 \*Mr. Bollwage. Thank you, Mr. Pallone. I recommended  
1105 in the testimony that we do 300 million per year for the next  
1106 5 years, and that the caps are set at 10 million for cleanup,

1107 multi-purpose, and job training grants \_ \$500,000 for  
1108 assessments is what is in my written testimony.

1109 \*Mr. Pallone. All right, thank you. And, I mean, the  
1110 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law had 1.5 billion. That was a  
1111 big boost to the program. And, you know, I don't want to  
1112 slow down that momentum because brownfield sites are getting  
1113 harder to remediate and clean up. So I think the  
1114 authorization levels need to reflect that, if you will. But  
1115 let me go to Ms. Stoneham.

1116 From your perspective, how important is it for Congress  
1117 to reauthorize the brownfields program, and particularly for  
1118 the planning of important projects that are in the pipeline?

1119 \*Ms. Stoneham. Absolutely. Thank you for that  
1120 question.

1121 So for the reuse planning aspect of brownfields  
1122 assessment, that is one of the first lines of implementation,  
1123 of just being able to have a feasibility study to have the  
1124 reuse planning. And then, of course, obviously, doing the  
1125 phase one and phase two testing. So having additional  
1126 appropriation so we can figure out what \_ not just what the  
1127 vision is, but do they also match the performance analysis of  
1128 whatever development is trying to take place would be  
1129 extremely helpful so we can move forward with additional  
1130 money needed for the capital stack as we are partnering with  
1131 the public, non-profit, and private sectors.

1132           \*Mr. Pallone. Did you want to add anything to that,  
1133 Mayor, about the planning of projects and the pipeline and  
1134 brownfield?

1135           \*Mr. Bollwage. I agree with my colleague over here. I  
1136 mean, as you know, Congressman and on both sides of me, when  
1137 we did the Jersey Gardens Mall, getting the money and the  
1138 assessments on the brownfields was relatively easy. Then  
1139 getting sign-off became much more difficult. And so I would  
1140 only add that part to the answer to the question.

1141           \*Mr. Pallone. Okay. You know, obviously, to provide  
1142 certainty for local and private sector investments we have to  
1143 ensure the program is reauthorized in a timely manner, as  
1144 well. I am going to ask both of you, the mayor and Ms.  
1145 Stoneham, the next question.

1146           Has the Trump Administration's illegal funding freeze  
1147 impacted the development and operation of your brownfields  
1148 projects, and how so?

1149           I will start with the mayor, if you will.

1150           \*Mr. Bollwage. So we have a \$500,000 grant under the  
1151 Jobs Act for brownfields, for job training, and it was held  
1152 up two weeks ago, or a month ago. We are waiting. We can't  
1153 even get a hold of anybody to talk to them. And just  
1154 recently I was told on a train on the way here this morning  
1155 that we would know an answer in the next two weeks, and that  
1156 is a tough way to deal with a grant that you got.

1157           Now, keep in mind the Groundworks association in  
1158 Elizabeth has put in a lot of upfront effort when it comes to  
1159 dollars and training for this, and now they are being told  
1160 you can't access the money.

1161           \*Mr. Pallone. Well, I \_ first of all, let me say I  
1162 learn a lot on the train back to New Jersey, as well.

1163           [Laughter.]

1164           \*Mr. Pallone. But, you see, this is the problem. We  
1165 had the freeze. The courts said you can't freeze the money.  
1166 But what I find more and more is that, even though in theory  
1167 the Trump Administration has recognized that they can't  
1168 freeze this money \_ not just for brownfields, but for so many  
1169 other things \_ that, practically speaking, in many cases this  
1170 freeze continues only because there is nobody to send out the  
1171 money, the portal doesn't work, you know, whatever it happens  
1172 to be.

1173           So let me ask Ms. \_

1174           \*Mr. Bollwage. I would just add to you, Mr.  
1175 Congressman, that if you don't answer the phone on the other  
1176 end \_

1177           \*Mr. Pallone. Yes, I mean, that is a problem.

1178           \*Mr. Bollwage. Yes.

1179           \*Mr. Pallone. So you got 50 \_ if \_ can I add Ms. \_ if  
1180 you wanted to add to that, Ms. Stoneham.

1181           \*Ms. Stoneham. Yes, so it significantly impacted our

1182 timeline planning of what we needed for the procurements for  
1183 the cleanup grant for five million that I mentioned earlier.  
1184 Definitely, just having the risk of us being a non-profit and  
1185 this being a reimbursement grant, I don't feel comfortable  
1186 even publishing it not knowing if we will have the  
1187 opportunity to pay our contractors.

1188         So we needed to meet the compliance measures, obviously,  
1189 of this particular grant, but we also have other people that  
1190 we have to report out to, including the community, the local  
1191 government. So definitely, the instability makes it  
1192 difficult in order for us to enact the development that we  
1193 said we were going to do.

1194         \*Mr. Pallone. Well, thank you.

1195         Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

1196         \*Mrs. Miller-Meeks. [Presiding.] The gentleman yields  
1197 back. The chair now recognizes the chair of the full  
1198 committee, Representative Guthrie, for five minutes.

1199         \*The Chair. Thank you. Thank you. Thanks to all the  
1200 witnesses for being here.

1201         Last year Congress passed the ADVANCE Act, which  
1202 required the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, or the NRC, to  
1203 modernize its efforts to develop domestic advanced nuclear  
1204 energy. The ADVANCE Act included the Nuclear for Brownfield  
1205 Sites Preparation Act, which directed the NRC to identify and  
1206 report on regulations, guidance, or policy necessary to

1207 license and allow nuclear facilities at brownfield sites, as  
1208 well as other sites with retired fossil fuel facilities.

1209 So Mr. Connaughton, in your testimony you discussed the  
1210 need to "deliver on the proven promise of brownfield-driven  
1211 industrial innovation," which requires, "a significant  
1212 modernization of governmental approval processes for site  
1213 assessment, permitting, and interconnecting."

1214 So Mr. Connaughton, could you discuss, in your view,  
1215 what improvements to the brownfields program could be made to  
1216 deliver on that promise?

1217 \*Mr. Connaughton. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Now, let's  
1218 start with nuclear.

1219 The key for nuclear is the stringent safety regulations  
1220 that the NRC is entrusted to implement, to be sure that these  
1221 projects are built in a \_ in the manner, historically, that  
1222 has been proven to be quite safe for our communities and  
1223 providing tons of zero emission power. That is the critical  
1224 path to making these projects work.

1225 If you think about the billions of dollars that go into  
1226 these projects, environmental compliance is a necessity. And  
1227 the work of certified professionals \_ the lawyers, engineers,  
1228 biologists, what have you \_ is conducted by the project  
1229 proponent. Okay? Meaning so that they meet at the highest  
1230 standards before they ever go to talk to a regulator.

1231 If we could have brownfield sites assessed and ready to

1232 go, and you have these new, more modular construction in  
1233 particular, but also conventional, and we had a system where  
1234 you actually built and submitted your paperwork demonstrating  
1235 compliance, okay, if you would \_ if we could just allow the  
1236 project to get built, okay, we would cut the cost by two-  
1237 thirds, and that is a direct pass-through to consumers. It  
1238 lowers your cost of capital for investment. It means we can  
1239 have three times more for the same price for our communities.

1240 Brownfields are great for that, and in the appropriate  
1241 NRC-identified locations the siting is critical. You still  
1242 want to 100 percent defer to local concerns and interests on  
1243 the siting process, but the permitting process and connecting  
1244 to the grid, if we don't fix it we are not going to get it.

1245 \*The Chair. Thank you, I appreciate that. So Mayor,  
1246 Mayor Bollwage, as I said, I spent a lot of time in the New  
1247 York-New Jersey border there, so it is beautiful town that  
1248 you have, and a beautiful area. So I just want to say \_ so  
1249 in your testimony you note that, "additional tools may be  
1250 necessary to convince owners of mothball properties that it  
1251 is safe to turn over or sell or redevelop those properties.'"   
1252 Would you talk about what tools you suggest would be  
1253 necessary, or may be necessary?

1254 \*Mr. Bollwage. Well, one of the tools that we have  
1255 locally would be eminent domain in order to take the  
1256 property, and that creates a liability issue. on who is going

1257 to be responsible if the city takes it over. The other tools  
1258 would be financial incentives in order to attract the  
1259 developer, whether it be through local tax abatements or  
1260 through other tax incentives. Tools that this committee or  
1261 the Congress could give us would naturally mean more dollars  
1262 moving towards the redevelopment process.

1263 \*The Chair. Thank you.

1264 And then \_ so Mr. Connaughton, in your testimony, you  
1265 asked rhetorically, shouldn't we be doing more to put  
1266 brownfield sites back to work with renewed deployment of  
1267 modern, large-scale industrial innovation? Do you want to  
1268 kind of expand on that?

1269 And then maybe also Mr. Mayor and Mr. Miller, as well,  
1270 want to expand on that?

1271 \*Mr. Connaughton. In the decades following World War II  
1272 we built this massive, physical footprint for the massive  
1273 industrialization that unfolded. And then we have basically,  
1274 you know, given most of it away to, you know, overseas and  
1275 moving into more of a services and small tech-based economy.  
1276 Now we are facing \_ we are paying the price for that, which  
1277 is now we got to rebuild it all. And the brownfield  
1278 footprint is there, it is efficient, it has got communities,  
1279 it has got all the amenities, it has got the schools, the  
1280 churches. So putting those communities back to work in the  
1281 new, modern form of infrastructure is an opportunity we just

1282 \_ we have to go after.

1283 \*The Chair. Okay, thanks.

1284 Mayor, I had you answer questions, so I will just skip  
1285 over it because I am about out of \_ Mr. Miller, shouldn't we  
1286 be doing more to put brownfields back to work for the large-  
1287 scale industrial \_ you want to expand on that, innovations?

1288 \*Mr. Miller. No, absolutely, Mr. Chairman. As I  
1289 mentioned in my comments \_ and kind of kind of switching, but  
1290 in terms of SMR feasibility site studies that we did in our  
1291 region, we identified seven possible sites. Six of those  
1292 seven are in brownfield areas.

1293 And kind of to your point to some of the other committee  
1294 members, I mentioned six of those seven sites are on  
1295 brownfield sites, and all seven sites scored above average on  
1296 a nationwide average in the siting tool for advanced nuclear  
1297 development, or the STAND criteria that is utilized for that.  
1298 So that kind of goes back to your point, I mean, about what  
1299 we can do for new types of projects.

1300 And I would love to talk to you more about this, I \_

1301 \*The Chair. I look forward to it. Yes, my time has  
1302 expired, but I will look forward to following up with you.  
1303 Thank you.

1304 \*Mr. Griffith. [Presiding.] The gentleman yields back.  
1305 I now recognize Ms. Schakowsky for her five minutes of  
1306 questioning.

1307           \*Ms. Schakowsky. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to  
1308 ask questions just of Ms. Stoneham and Mr. Bollwage - am I  
1309 saying that right?

1310           My questions, of course, deal with this issue of the,  
1311 you know, what is going on in our communities. And it is so  
1312 important that we have clean places for our children, for our  
1313 community, for our merchants to have. And we know that in  
1314 Illinois, seven of the counties definitely have places that  
1315 need to be cleaned up and have not been so far.

1316           But I wanted to raise the question that seems to defer  
1317 the ability \_ or could defer the ability to clean up. And  
1318 one of them, an important one that we see right now, is that  
1319 there are monies that are being taken away right now, and  
1320 that there is going to be fewer amount \_ less amount of money  
1321 to be able to clean up these brownfields. And I am just  
1322 wondering how you see the problem that is going to be  
1323 emerging when the money is not available to do the cleanup.

1324           And I mentioned the two people I am hoping would answer  
1325 that.

1326           \*Ms. Stoneham. So definitely not having the funding we  
1327 need, especially with Houston and the significant amount of  
1328 brownfields throughout the city and across our nation, would  
1329 have an economic decline. I strongly believe in public-  
1330 private partnership, and it is just too much for a private  
1331 investor to take on solely on their own, especially with all

1332 of the compliance measures that need to take place. And  
1333 having those funds will ensure the stability to have  
1334 continued \_ contiguous change for the different developments  
1335 needed across our nation, whether it is housing or green  
1336 space or solar activity.

1337       Really, just having that consistency is absolutely  
1338 necessary, in addition to the staff needed to make sure that  
1339 the paperwork and the compliance measures are moving forward  
1340 accordingly, as well.

1341       \*Ms. Schakowsky. Well, I really feel concerned that  
1342 people who have been doing this work \_ that the money is  
1343 shrinking, that it has been taken away through the Trump  
1344 Administration, and I am just concerned that who is going to  
1345 be able to have the money if the people who are working on  
1346 these projects are out of a job.

1347       \*Ms. Stoneham. I strongly agree and echo your  
1348 sentiments, as well.

1349       \*Ms. Schakowsky. Well, we have to watch that the \_ when  
1350 there are dollars being taken away, because then, you know,  
1351 we need to have all the resources that we have in our  
1352 communities. We know in the Chicago area itself this is a  
1353 real problem.

1354       And I am wondering if Mr. \_ let me get the name right.

1355       \*Mr. Bollwage. Bollwage?

1356       \*Ms. Schakowsky. Yes.

1357           \*Mr. Bollwage. Okay.

1358           [Laughter.]

1359           \*Mr. Bollwage. Thank you, Congresswoman. Many  
1360 communities are still going to do the easy ones. They are  
1361 still going to do the ones that are simple in the  
1362 brownfields. And, you know, Congress recognized this in 2018  
1363 in the reauthorization bill, raising the cleanup grants to \_  
1364 200 to \$500,000 with the flexibility to go up to \$650,000,  
1365 based on the anticipated level of contamination.

1366           But in answering your question, we also need people in  
1367 the EPA to answer the phones.

1368           \*Ms. Schakowsky. Thank you so much.

1369           I yield back.

1370           \*Mr. Griffith. The gentlelady yields back. I now  
1371 recognize Mr. Latta for five minutes of questioning.

1372           \*Mr. Latta. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thanks  
1373 very much for our witnesses for being with us today. It is a  
1374 very important topic.

1375           And if I could, Mr. Connaughton, if I could ask you,  
1376 because you \_ I am sorry I had to step out for a couple of  
1377 meetings, but you mentioned something that is kind of near  
1378 and dear to everybody's heart as we are watching what is  
1379 happening today with data centers going up across the  
1380 country, and there is a real question of, you know, where  
1381 they are being placed, you know, and the amount of space that

1382 is needed for them.

1383 And I would get your opinion as to what do you see the \_  
1384 what we could be doing on brownfields and data centers,  
1385 because this is absolutely a massive need that we are going  
1386 to be having in this country, not just the massive amount of  
1387 power we are going to have to have, but just the siting and  
1388 some of the issues we have there.

1389 \*Mr. Connaughton. Just to put things in perspective, if  
1390 we were sitting here 10 years ago, a 5-megawatt data center  
1391 would be big. And then, very quickly it was 20 megawatts.  
1392 Just 2 years ago, 100 megawatts was a gigantic data center.  
1393 We are involved, my former company where I worked with  
1394 Nautilus Technologies, we are involved with a project at a  
1395 coal-fired \_ old coal-fired power plant that shut down in  
1396 Portugal, 1.2 gigawatts, so 1,200 megawatts of power that  
1397 that data center will use.

1398 And in America you are seeing these 250, 500-megawatt  
1399 projects that want to be built and can't find the places that  
1400 they can build to get access to the power or the time to be  
1401 able to build their own power in anything that represents,  
1402 you know, the demand. I describe this as we need to build at  
1403 the speed of the need, and we have got too many obstacles to  
1404 getting there.

1405 The thing I want to underline is these data centers are  
1406 essential to our daily lives. And the beauty is they are out

1407 of sight, you know, and they are in big warehouses, but they  
1408 don't clutter our world. They don't clutter our world. Our  
1409 world shows up like this. And so they are really, really  
1410 valuable pieces of infrastructure.

1411 And then, of course, with AI, they are going to be  
1412 defining the, you know, the industrial, you know, the fourth  
1413 industrial revolution. And America kind of owns that right  
1414 now. We could give it up. Ireland, for example, has no  
1415 process for siting any new data centers of any size. They  
1416 just killed the goose that laid the golden egg. Ireland was  
1417 a hub for information technology companies, and it is over in  
1418 Ireland. I do not want to see that happen here.

1419 Okay, we have the ability to use brownfields to make  
1420 these data centers \_

1421 \*Mr. Latta. You know, the problem is, you know, if we  
1422 think about what we always talk about in this committee \_ and  
1423 hopefully we are going to get something done in this Congress  
1424 \_ like on permitting, you will be able to, you know, get into  
1425 these brownfields and say, you know what? It is safe to put  
1426 these in.

1427 And so where do you see on the permitting side \_ what do  
1428 we need to be doing on permitting to move things along, get  
1429 things along faster?

1430 You know, the great thing about this committee, the  
1431 broad jurisdiction we have, I have never heard anybody ever

1432 testify before saying that they were against all regulations.  
1433 Just give us regulations that we can live with. But what do  
1434 you see on the permitting side that we ought to be doing  
1435 right now?

1436       \*Mr. Connaughton. You know, what is interesting, we had  
1437 all the big infrastructure projects, data centers,  
1438 semiconductors \_ by the way, even shipbuilding today \_ they  
1439 actually don't have a big outward environmental footprint.  
1440 There is a lot of things to comply with, okay, but all the  
1441 methods of controlling to prevent environmental contamination  
1442 are, you know, are well known and are in place.

1443       And so if we could simply change the default to yes,  
1444 with inspection and enforcement of non-compliance, which  
1445 almost never occurs, that solves the problem. And you do it  
1446 in site assessment, you do it in permitting, and you do it  
1447 with interconnection, You have to create an automated  
1448 system. We live in a modern age.

1449       When I got my car this morning, I did not call the  
1450 police to get permission to leave my home, promising I would  
1451 \_ you know, I am certified, I have my license, I have my  
1452 insurance, I am trusted to comply. And if I don't comply,  
1453 they come, they come and get me. We should be doing the same  
1454 for our infrastructure builders because they are really  
1455 skilled and they spend \_ you know, we are talking about  
1456 billion-dollar projects, \$10 billion projects.

1457           You know, we are in a whole new world in America, you  
1458 know, putting in physical infrastructure again. We have got  
1459 to match that opportunity.

1460           \*Mr. Latta. Well, in my last 45 seconds, you know, let  
1461 me ask this because, again, when you are talking about going  
1462 to brownfields, especially when you're going to, let's say  
1463 coal-fired plants, what is the real \_ the difficulty for  
1464 saying I am going to go into that facility to put that data  
1465 center in there, where these plants want to be there?

1466           And I only have about 28 seconds left.

1467           \*Mr. Connaughton. State or Federal environmental review  
1468 process, which is four to five years, and a parallel or  
1469 overlapping state and Federal permitting process, which  
1470 causes me to have to know that I can't build and complete  
1471 anything in less than 8 or 10 years.

1472           There are some exceptions to that, by the way, and they  
1473 are really good. Like in Memphis, the big AI data center  
1474 there was built in six months, with just six months of \_ they  
1475 had a lot of support \_ six months of clearances. They have  
1476 set the benchmark. We should be able to do this in a year.  
1477 If Memphis can do it in a year, the rest of the country  
1478 should be able to do it in a year.

1479           [Laughter.]

1480           \*Mr. Latta. Well, thank you very much, and my time is  
1481 expiring. I will give the balance of my questions written to

1482     our witnesses.

1483             [The information follows:]

1484

1485     \*\*\*\*\*COMMITTEE INSERT\*\*\*\*\*

1486

1487           \*Mr. Latta. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

1488           \*Mr. Griffith. The gentleman yields back. I now  
1489 recognize Dr. Ruiz for his five minutes of questions.

1490           \*Mr. Ruiz. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

1491           Today's topic is about the critical importance of the  
1492 brownfield program and its impact on communities across the  
1493 country. As we all know, the brownfields program provides  
1494 funding and resources to clean up and redevelop contaminated  
1495 sites, transforming them into safe, usable spaces that drive  
1496 economic growth and environmental restoration.

1497           There is bipartisan consensus that the brownfield  
1498 program is essential for community revitalization. Cleaning  
1499 up contaminated sites and transforming them into economic  
1500 engines benefits everyone: businesses, workers, and families  
1501 across America.

1502           The Environmental Protection Agency's brownfields  
1503 program is a proven solution. By providing grants and  
1504 resources to assess, clean up, and revitalize these sites we  
1505 can turn blighted, polluted lands into thriving community  
1506 spaces, whether it is new housing, small businesses, or  
1507 parks. And since the program's inception, it has helped  
1508 create hundreds of thousands of jobs and leveraged billions  
1509 in private investment nationwide.

1510           Mr. Bollwage, could you share how does the brownfields  
1511 program contribute to local economies, particularly in terms

1512 of job creation and attracting private investment?

1513       \*Mr. Bollwage. So we had a former landfill in the City  
1514 of Elizabeth of almost 200 acres. We transformed that with  
1515 an initial grant of assessment into a mall that is about 200  
1516 stores, 2 million square feet, 4 hotels on the waterfront,  
1517 providing hundreds of jobs, plus 5,000 construction jobs.  
1518 That site generated \$63,000 a year to the City of Elizabeth.  
1519 And now, with the state incentives and others, it generates  
1520 over \$7 million a year to the City of Elizabeth.

1521       \*Mr. Ruiz. That is incredible. In my district we see  
1522 firsthand the consequences of abandoned, contaminated  
1523 properties, sites that once held promise but have instead  
1524 become environmental and economic burdens. And these  
1525 brownfield sites, many of which are former \_ formal \_ former  
1526 industrial facilities, gas stations, or landfills pose risks  
1527 to public health, drive down property value, limit economic  
1528 development in already underserved communities.

1529       [Slide]

1530       \*Mr. Ruiz. For example, in 2019 the City of Raleigh  
1531 facilitated the sale and redevelopment of this CEQA property.  
1532 Once an unusable contaminated site, as you see in this photo,  
1533 that sat vacant for years and was a hardship on the community  
1534 \_ and thanks to the EPA's brownfield remediation efforts,  
1535 that property has been transformed into a thriving car repair  
1536 shop not only \_ that not only improves the area's appearance,

1537 but also provides good-paying jobs and brings economic  
1538 activity to the district. So this is a perfect example of  
1539 how strategic investment in brownfields cleanup leads to  
1540 real, tangible benefits for our communities.

1541 Ms. Stoneham, how does brownfield redevelopment  
1542 contribute to broader environmental and sustainability goals,  
1543 such as reducing urban sprawl and promoting green  
1544 infrastructure?

1545 \*Ms. Stoneham. Absolutely. With the Project Yellow Cab  
1546 case study that I mentioned earlier, just that being in the  
1547 urban core and producing an urban typology for the single  
1548 family homes is providing an opportunity for people to live,  
1549 work, and play.

1550 But also, additionally, the trash incinerator site,  
1551 which is transforming into a green space, connects to a  
1552 bigger Bayou master plan of how affordable housing and just  
1553 being able to walk on the bayou and the different  
1554 environmental measures and preservation components that we  
1555 are evaluating, as well.

1556 \*Mr. Ruiz. Thank you. You know, we must remember that  
1557 this is also about community investment. Too often,  
1558 historically underserved neighborhoods like those in my  
1559 district face the greatest challenges from contamination and  
1560 neglect. The EPA's brownfields program helps revitalize  
1561 these areas by driving redevelopment, creating jobs, and

1562 bringing much-needed economic opportunities to the  
1563 communities that need them the most.

1564 Oh wait, did I say bringing much-needed economic  
1565 opportunities to the communities that need them the most?  
1566 That is equity. That is equity. And rural communities like  
1567 those from my Republican colleagues on the other side need  
1568 these funds just as well. That is why we must continue  
1569 supporting these programs. Investing in brownfield  
1570 remediation is not just about cleaning up land. It is about  
1571 building healthier communities, creating jobs, and ensuring  
1572 that all Americans, no matter their zip code, have access to  
1573 clean air, safe water, and economic opportunity. That is why  
1574 I urge my colleagues to join me in strengthening and fully  
1575 funding the brownfields program and the EPA staff who make  
1576 this program work so we can continue turning environmental  
1577 liabilities into safe, economic opportunities for families  
1578 across the country.

1579 I yield back.

1580 \*Mr. Griffith. I thank the gentleman for yielding back.  
1581 I notice that we have a group of students who have joined us.

1582 This is the Environment Subcommittee of the Energy and  
1583 Commerce Committee. We welcome you here today. We are  
1584 discussing brownfields, and we have four experts from across  
1585 the country who are giving us different ideas. We anticipate  
1586 that this will occur, that we will reauthorize the

1587 brownfields program, but perhaps with some suggestions that  
1588 our witnesses have brought to our attention.

1589 With that I now recognize Mr. Carter of Georgia for his  
1590 five minutes of questions.

1591 \*Mr. Carter of Georgia. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman,  
1592 and thank each of you for being here. And I am glad the  
1593 students are here, too. I hope you are learning a lot. I  
1594 know I am, because brownfields are important. Brownfields \_  
1595 in fact, we got over 450,000 brownfields here in the United  
1596 States, and every one of them represents a unique opportunity  
1597 for us. And I hope that we take those opportunities and \_  
1598 certainly, what we are discussing today is important.

1599 On this committee, Energy and Commerce, we talk a lot  
1600 about energy needs. We know that we are going to need more  
1601 energy in the future, and our growing energy needs \_ and we  
1602 also talk about the need for more businesses. So we ought to  
1603 be looking at brownfields as places where we can grow.

1604 My own state of Georgia has over 50 major data centers,  
1605 and many of the brownfields have the potential to house  
1606 future data centers, and for good reasons. And a lot of  
1607 these sites have electrical existing power delivery  
1608 infrastructure, which is a common challenge for data centers.

1609 Mr. Connaughton, let me ask \_ Connaughton?

1610 \*Mr. Connaughton. Connaughton, perfect.

1611 \*Mr. Carter of Georgia. Connaughton, okay.

1612 Connaughton. Your company specializes in creating data  
1613 center-related technologies. I have visited many data  
1614 centers, and they use a lot of energy, a whole lot of energy.  
1615 Do you feel that brownfields represent an opportunity for  
1616 building out more data centers in America?

1617 \*Mr. Connaughton. Yes, I certainly do, and I will give  
1618 you the example of my company, Nautilus, where we have  
1619 invented an approach to cool data centers the same way you  
1620 cool a coal-fired power plant or an industrial processing  
1621 facility, and that is taking naturally cold water running  
1622 through the data center and returning it unchanged, just a  
1623 little bit warmer, back to the water body it came from. That  
1624 is how we do power plants, industrial facilities. It is how  
1625 we cool ship engines.

1626 So imagine all of these old thermal power plants, these  
1627 old manufacturing centers that already have that intake and  
1628 the discharge infrastructure. It has already been permitted  
1629 in the past. The regulators know and understand what \_ you  
1630 know, what the dynamics of this are. They tend to be located  
1631 close, by the way, to water treatment facilities and other  
1632 big infrastructure, so the workforce is there. And the  
1633 communities are familiar with and accept that kind of  
1634 activity.

1635 So we could, you know, immediately be repurposing these  
1636 old energy centers and these old manufacturing centers if we

1637 were able to deal with permitting, okay? I went to a site \_

1638 \*Mr. Carter of Georgia. Well, how is permitting holding  
1639 you up? Tell me that.

1640 \*Mr. Connaughton. So our technology results in a  
1641 process that does not trigger any environmental controls or  
1642 regulatory standards. And yet, in building that at a  
1643 brownfield at the Port of Stockton, right, which is a  
1644 community that really would benefit from this investment, and  
1645 even though our state NEPA review \_ it is called CEQA \_ our  
1646 state \_

1647 \*Mr. Carter of Georgia. Right.

1648 \*Mr. Connaughton. \_ review, we got through it nine  
1649 months because we had no impacts, we had no negative impacts,  
1650 it still took us three-and-a-half years to get signed off on  
1651 \_ of the NEPA. We then had to wait \_

1652 \*Mr. Carter of Georgia. Three-and-a-half years?

1653 \*Mr. Connaughton. Yes. And then we had to wait to file  
1654 all our regular environmental permits until that process was  
1655 done.

1656 \*Mr. Carter of Georgia. Okay.

1657 \*Mr. Connaughton. Because the permitters don't want to  
1658 get into their work until the NEPA is done. And then for  
1659 them \_ remember, we had no environmental things \_ nothing to  
1660 regulate. That still took a year for them to agree with us  
1661 that there was nothing to regulate.

1662           \*Mr. Carter of Georgia. Okay.

1663           \*Mr. Connaughton. And in one case we still got  
1664 additional requirements, even though it wasn't required by  
1665 law. So that is the challenge. That is just one example of  
1666 the, you know, thousands of them out there.

1667           \*Mr. Carter of Georgia. All right. Well, and I want to  
1668 get to two more things, and one of them \_ Mr. Miller, he just  
1669 described an area that I think could help us.

1670           These brownfields are in rural areas just as well as  
1671 urban areas. So this is an example where you could actually  
1672 use the brownfields in rural areas, as well, correct?

1673           \*Mr. Miller. Correct. That is what we want to do. We  
1674 actually, in the \_ I guess we refer to it as a green room \_  
1675 back earlier we were talking and made sure we traded contact  
1676 with one another to put focus on this. I mean, yes, I mean,  
1677 rural areas should really be \_

1678           \*Mr. Carter of Georgia. You got water supplies, you got  
1679 everything \_

1680           \*Mr. Miller. You got \_

1681           \*Mr. Carter of Georgia. \_ that you need.

1682           \*Mr. Miller. Right.

1683           \*Mr. Carter of Georgia. Good, good.

1684           \*Mr. Miller. One thing \_

1685           \*Mr. Carter of Georgia. So this sounds win-win.

1686           \*Mr. Miller. One thing that we do lack in some of our

1687 rural areas is the power supply for those data centers. But  
1688 yet again, brownfields are also very attractable to  
1689 alternative types of energy, whether it is small modular  
1690 reactors, micro hydrogen, or any of those other types of  
1691 forms that you could then, you know, use those for behind-  
1692 the-meter power to these data centers.

1693 \*Mr. Carter of Georgia. Okay, all right. The chairman  
1694 has already warned us about asking questions with little time  
1695 remaining, but I will \_ I got to get to this because I  
1696 represent the coast of Georgia, two major seaports.

1697 Shipyards, Mr. Connaughton, what about the  
1698 infrastructure \_ shipyard \_ how can we upgrade shipyard  
1699 infrastructure and the importance of building new classes of  
1700 vessels, much of which will take place on brownfield sites?

1701 \*Mr. Connaughton. The locations are there. We just  
1702 need to say yes to building, and we need to extend the  
1703 Opportunity Zone law to these infrastructure locations to  
1704 bring in and leverage, you know, on a, you know, 9-to-1 or  
1705 20-to-1 basis, private sector capital.

1706 \*Mr. Carter of Georgia. Great, great, good. Well,  
1707 thank you all very much. This sounds like a win-win  
1708 situation, something we should be \_ all be interested in.

1709 Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I will yield back.

1710 \*Mr. Griffith. I thank the gentleman for yielding back,  
1711 and I now yield for a point of personal privilege to Mr.

1712 Tonko.

1713 \*Mr. Tonko. I see our former colleague, Congressman  
1714 Butterfield, is in the audience, and a faithful member in the  
1715 House, and led a lot of good fights on the environment.

1716 So good to see you, Congressman, and always a pleasure  
1717 to introduce you. Welcome.

1718 \*Mr. Griffith. Welcome, and we appreciate you being  
1719 back.

1720 I now recognize Representative Peters for his five  
1721 minutes of questioning.

1722 \*Mr. Peters. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

1723 Mr. Connaughton, a lot of us have expressed concern  
1724 about the delays in permitting for getting stuff built. We  
1725 have worked really hard on clean energy, in particular on  
1726 this committee. And even the Biden Administration recognized  
1727 that. Last year they took some steps to expedite permitting  
1728 under the National Environmental Policy Act, or NEPA, for  
1729 clean energy on disturbed, developed, or lower-conflict  
1730 areas. So we are all in this permit reform game.

1731 I wanted to ask you about something \_ a distinction you  
1732 drew in your testimony about limiting the scope of NEPA  
1733 review to unquantified impacts. Can you tell me what that  
1734 means, versus quantified? What is an example of that?

1735 \*Mr. Connaughton. Yes, so if you take the original NEPA  
1736 law \_ so read it, the second page \_ it says the agency, you

1737 know, shall consider unquantified impacts. Because in 1970  
1738 we didn't have this modern body of environmental law. So it  
1739 was a good idea, okay? And I am a big defender of NEPA, by  
1740 the way, and I think NEPA is important.

1741 But over 50 years we now have environmental laws  
1742 covering everything, quantifying everything.

1743 \*Mr. Peters. For example, the Clean Air Act \_

1744 \*Mr. Connaughton. Air, water, endangered species.

1745 \*Mr. Peters. Right.

1746 \*Mr. Connaughton. You know, dust, you know, you name  
1747 it, we have a law that covers it. And then state and local  
1748 laws that do, on a fine-grained basis, at the local level.  
1749 And so all project developers have to comply with all of  
1750 that, and they do. That is the great thing. We should be  
1751 celebrating that. They do comply with it.

1752 And so this idea for NEPA is \_ you know, I had a 160-  
1753 page NEPA document I had to do for my first data center, and  
1754 all it talked about was all the stuff the other agencies were  
1755 going to regulate. But I couldn't get to them until I got  
1756 through my CEQA process. And so this is my point. It is  
1757 redundant.

1758 \*Mr. Peters. So what is the unquantified impact in that  
1759 case? You have the \_ in other words, you have the Clean  
1760 Water Act that says you can release a certain amount of  
1761 pollution, but not over that amount without a permit. So we

1762 know that is covered. What is the unquantified impact you  
1763 look at under NEPA?

1764 \*Mr. Connaughton. So what would be left is actually  
1765 uniquely local circumstances like, you know, proximity to a  
1766 school, what kind of traffic flows there will be, right?  
1767 There will be a whole bunch of unregulated things that are of  
1768 social and environmental interest and concern.

1769 \*Mr. Peters. Okay.

1770 \*Mr. Connaughton. And you want to capture that, which  
1771 is what the \_ you know, what the idea originally was for NEPA  
1772 and for the state versions of it. So you will have a \_ you  
1773 know, I think you would have a much-reduced NEPA document  
1774 that would be highly relevant to what matters locally, while  
1775 still getting all the work done through the regulatory  
1776 process.

1777 \*Mr. Peters. A lot of people on my side of the aisle  
1778 express concern that that would limit public input into these  
1779 decisions. So give me an example of why that is not a  
1780 concern for one of these quantified impacts you won't be  
1781 analyzing under NEPA anymore.

1782 \*Mr. Connaughton. So you would have a public comment  
1783 related to the zoning of the site. So that is the first and  
1784 most important place. So the community speaks about site  
1785 suitability through zoning. And you have got to preserve  
1786 that, and that is good.

1787           If it is a Federal project, Federal lands, or the stuff  
1788   the FERC sites, then you have a national process for that in  
1789   which there is extensive public provision for public  
1790   engagement, and they can sue. So you still \_ you also have  
1791   the public being able to participate in lawsuits. So that  
1792   will occur.

1793           In the unquantified NEPA piece, the community will  
1794   participate in the development of the unquantified analysis.  
1795   So they will have that.

1796           And then, with respect to the regulations, there is, you  
1797   know, six, seven layers of public participation in the  
1798   original legislation, and the development of the regulation,  
1799   in the development of the standards, in the permits there  
1800   that are provided for those activities.

1801           And then, the public participation in enforcement. You  
1802   could have citizen enforcement \_

1803           \*Mr. Peters. Yes.

1804           \*Mr. Connaughton. \_ and they can participate in  
1805   lawsuits.

1806           \*Mr. Peters. So by a long shot \_

1807           \*Mr. Connaughton. So \_

1808           \*Mr. Peters. \_ NEPA is not the only point of public  
1809   impact, whether it is quantified or unquantified.

1810           \*Mr. Connaughton. Well, arguably it is actually the  
1811   least \_

1812           \*Mr. Peters. Right, right.

1813           \*Mr. Connaughton. \_ important in terms of environmental  
1814 compliance. It is the most important in terms of local  
1815 suitability.

1816           \*Mr. Peters. Right. A lot of folks have also suggested  
1817 that we don't need to change the process. What we need to do  
1818 is really staff up the agencies. I know the Biden  
1819 Administration led an effort to provide \$1 billion to do  
1820 that, and we \_ that may be under some question. Is that an  
1821 answer in this case, or do we have to have process reforms?

1822           \*Mr. Connaughton. Well, we have a gross mismatch  
1823 between the scale of what we need to get done and the number  
1824 of officials we have to do it. And it is a gross mismatch.

1825           \*Mr. Peters. Right.

1826           \*Mr. Connaughton. And there is no addition of staff  
1827 that will change that. Here is \_ let me tell you why.

1828           Let's just assume it is 100,000 projects. It is more  
1829 like 200,000, but let's assume it is 100,000 projects. That  
1830 is 100,000 projects. Each project developer is hiring  
1831 lawyers, environmental consultants, and engineers. Their  
1832 banker is doing it too, and their insurance company is doing  
1833 it, too, okay? So that is a lot of professionals per project  
1834 \_ nine, at a minimum \_ to sign off on the project.

1835           Then it goes to the Federal, state, and local  
1836 regulators, 5 to 25 permits, okay, times all the districts

1837 and states.

1838 \*Mr. Peters. Right.

1839 \*Mr. Connaughton. Okay? So you end up with sort of  
1840 thousands of offices involved in doing all this permitting  
1841 times 100,000 projects, each one of which then has another  
1842 permit bundle for connecting to the grid, and another permit  
1843 bundle for doing digital connection. So that is several  
1844 hundred thousand review \_ requirements. That is millions of  
1845 reviews. We are not built, as a nation, to handle what we  
1846 now want.

1847 \*Mr. Peters. Right, right.

1848 \*Mr. Connaughton. As a matter of process.

1849 \*Mr. Peters. Well, I am out of time. I do appreciate  
1850 all your work on permitting and helping us get back to  
1851 building stuff again.

1852 And Mr. Chairman, thank you for the hearing. I yield  
1853 back.

1854 \*Mr. Griffith. The gentleman yields back. I now  
1855 recognize Representative Joyce for his five minutes of  
1856 questioning.

1857 \*Mr. Joyce. First I want to thank Chairman Griffith for  
1858 holding today's hearing on EPA's brownfields program, and the  
1859 witnesses for joining us.

1860 In Pennsylvania we are proud of our industries, the  
1861 coal, the steel, and allied industries that were mined and

1862 forged in our cities and in our towns. Sadly, many of these  
1863 legacy industries have fallen on hard times and gone out of  
1864 business, leaving behind land in need of environmental  
1865 cleanup and communities with limited resources to invest in  
1866 that necessary redevelopment. This is where EPA's  
1867 brownfields program has been useful to ensure that these are  
1868 areas that are not left behind, and economic development can  
1869 occur.

1870         Across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania counties like  
1871 Cambria and Blair have used brownfields to leverage public  
1872 and private funding to create family-sustaining jobs. This  
1873 program is a great example of how, instead of Federal  
1874 Government getting in the way with burdensome regulations, it  
1875 can work with local stakeholders to spur lasting  
1876 redevelopment.

1877         I have seen how successful these efforts have been in my  
1878 own hometown of Altoona, Pennsylvania, where a brownfield  
1879 grant helped encourage downtown redevelopment by jump-  
1880 starting investment. In Johnstown, brownfields funds were  
1881 used to build the Greater Johnstown High School. Another  
1882 brownfields grant in Johnstown redeveloped the Cambria  
1883 Ironworks, repurposing older industrial buildings into an  
1884 area that can attract visitors and residents, while creating  
1885 opportunities for new manufacturing jobs.

1886         In the last few years, three new brownfields grants have

1887 been awarded in my district by the EPA. Two are in western  
1888 Pennsylvania, in Cambria and Somerset Counties, and one in  
1889 central Pennsylvania that helps capitalize a \$1 million  
1890 brownfields revolving fund that covers Mifflin, Perry, and  
1891 Juniata counties. Across my district I could go on and on  
1892 about different success stories of local communities taking  
1893 advantage of this program to bring their towns back to life.

1894 Mayor Bollwage, in your written testimony you discussed  
1895 some of the benefits of the multi-purpose brownfield grants  
1896 created in the 2018 reauthorization of the program. You also  
1897 noted that it would be helpful for cities to be able to use  
1898 the funding for wider areas. Are there any limitations on  
1899 the funding that make it challenging to redevelop cities or  
1900 maximize the value of these properties?

1901 And if so, do you have any recommendations on how the  
1902 EPA could be more helpful for economic redevelopment?

1903 \*Mr. Bollwage. Well, thank you, Mr. \_ thank you,  
1904 Congressman.

1905 The first thing is, naturally, resources, and the  
1906 maximum or the minimum amount of resources. We would like to  
1907 use the multi-purpose grants continue [sic]. We want to see  
1908 it included in the reauthorization, as well as the dollar  
1909 amounts increase. We would also like to ask the EPA to allow  
1910 for the broadest application of the area to be covered by  
1911 this part of the grant.

1912           \*Mr. Joyce. Mr. Connaughton, similarly, do you have any  
1913 suggestions for Congress or the EPA on how the current  
1914 program could better facilitate a variety of uses on  
1915 brownfield sites or allow the applicants to redevelop  
1916 properties with unique aspects?

1917           And can you explain why all stakeholders need to have  
1918 skin in the game?

1919           \*Mr. Connaughton. Thank you. I think, as I mentioned  
1920 previously, we have this opportunity to take the big old  
1921 sites and convert them into big new sites. And in that  
1922 instance you are going to be able to leverage a lot of  
1923 private-sector capital as long as you, you know, have them  
1924 see the capital go into completing a project in a reasonable  
1925 period of time. That is why the permitting reform is  
1926 necessary.

1927           We have some great programs, like I mentioned, the  
1928 Opportunity Zone law, which is quite popular and doing well.  
1929 The big complaint with Opportunity Zones is it is not going  
1930 to build big infrastructure projects. Why? Because you have  
1931 to put your money in in six months, and a project has to be  
1932 ready to go. And the problem is there aren't big  
1933 infrastructure projects ready to go if \_ and then you need  
1934 the site to be designated as an Opportunity Zone. I think a  
1935 lot of governors did good designations, but didn't think  
1936 about these big industrial locations or shipyards, so I

1937 really recommend doing another designation round under that  
1938 law, and I think you will bring forward hundreds of billions,  
1939 if not trillions of dollars of new private-sector money. And  
1940 that is serious skin in the game, Congressman.

1941 \*Mr. Joyce. Mr. Miller, have you or others in your  
1942 organization identified any limitations on acceptable uses of  
1943 brownfields funding or lack of flexibility with any of the  
1944 funding streams with the Federal brownfields program?

1945 \*Mr. Miller. Not necessarily with the funding streams,  
1946 but as much dealing with issues with the complexity of the  
1947 application process itself for smaller, rural areas.

1948 I mentioned in my opening comments, you know, we have  
1949 had to pull resources together with our localities, kind of  
1950 with the approach stronger as a whole, weaker as pieces, and  
1951 going in for those funds.

1952 The other item is strengthened provisions for rural,  
1953 distressed coal communities and what we could do because,  
1954 again, those localities, I am sure in your district as well,  
1955 struggle for funds, not for any other reason than just  
1956 because of their small size.

1957 \*Mr. Joyce. And I thank you for emphasizing the need in  
1958 rural areas. That is indeed my district.

1959 Mr. Chairman, my time has expired. I yield back.

1960 \*Mr. Griffith. I thank the gentleman for yielding back  
1961 and now recognize Representative Barragan for her five

1962 minutes of questioning.

1963           \*Ms. Barragan. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and to our  
1964 witnesses for being here.

1965           I appreciate the bipartisan support we have on this  
1966 committee for the brownfields program at the Environmental  
1967 Protection Agency. However, the EPA's budget and the staff  
1968 it needs to implement its programs are under attack from the  
1969 Trump Administration. President Trump and EPA Administrator  
1970 Zeldin have talked about a 65 percent cut on the EPA's  
1971 budget. This would gut the very programs that keep our air  
1972 clean, our water safe, and our children healthy. This  
1973 threatens every program at EPA, including the brownfields  
1974 program. And House Republicans have been silent on these  
1975 cuts to EPA.

1976           Mr. Miller, would massive cuts to the EPA funding harm  
1977 the brownfields program and the work of your organizations,  
1978 yes or no?

1979           \*Mr. Miller. It comes down to efficiency.

1980           \*Ms. Barragan. So you are telling me that if there is a  
1981 65 percent cut to EPA, that you don't think there could be an  
1982 impact to the brownfields program? Is that what you are  
1983 saying?

1984           \*Mr. Miller. I don't know \_

1985           \*Ms. Barragan. Okay.

1986           \*Mr. Miller. \_ until that reduction was -

1987           \*Ms. Barragan. Thank you.

1988           The honorable Connaughton, have \_ what is your thought?

1989   If there is a 65 percent cut to EPA budget, do you think -

1990           \*Mr. Connaughton. If they are cutting the funding for  
1991   the brownfields program, then it will have an impact on the  
1992   brownfields program, and that is why I am trying to advocate  
1993   we need to \_ in this budget environment and in this political  
1994   environment, we should be looking at the funding sources, and  
1995   we should be looking at the leverage that the \_ at the  
1996   leverage. Because even with the current brownfield funding,  
1997   it doesn't come close to matching the opportunity that we  
1998   have got to achieve here.

1999           \*Ms. Barragan. So \_

2000           \*Mr. Connaughton. I would want to look at all of it.

2001           \*Ms. Barragan. So would it be safe for you to say there  
2002   shouldn't be a single penny cut to the brownfields program?

2003           \*Mr. Connaughton. No.

2004           \*Ms. Barragan. That there should not be? Or no, you  
2005   are not saying that?

2006           \*Mr. Connaughton. I am not saying that. I am saying \_

2007           \*Ms. Barragan. Okay.

2008           \*Mr. Connaughton. \_ we need to take a look at the  
2009   program to leverage the dollars to do even more, in which  
2010   case it could justify increasing. And as we have been  
2011   discussing today, there could be good reason to increase the

2012 money if we are getting 20 times the benefit.

2013 \*Ms. Barragan. Okay.

2014 \*Mr. Connaughton. That would be a good deal, in my  
2015 view.

2016 \*Ms. Barragan. Okay, thank you.

2017 Mr. \_ Mayor Bollwage, many brownfield sites are in rural  
2018 areas, low-income communities, and communities of color. How  
2019 would funding cuts impact efforts to clean up contaminated  
2020 land in disadvantaged communities?

2021 \*Mr. Bollwage. I can only speak to what is going on in  
2022 Elizabeth right now. We have a \$500,000 grant for job  
2023 training, and there is no one picking up the phone at EPA.

2024 \*Ms. Barragan. Ms. Stoneham, do you have any thoughts  
2025 on this?

2026 \*Ms. Stoneham. Yes, I would say that cutting staffing  
2027 by 65 percent would significantly impact the brownfields  
2028 program in Houston. Just the regional coordination that we  
2029 experience with them on a recurring basis, which is monthly  
2030 and sometimes weekly, depending on the projects, would slow  
2031 us down significantly, in addition to the progress happening  
2032 in the communities that we impact, which are majority  
2033 underserved and low income.

2034 \*Ms. Barragan. Great, thank you.

2035 Mayor Bollwage, as Congress discusses the  
2036 reauthorization of the brownfields program, are there any

2037 improvements or incentives you recommend to better direct  
2038 grants to disadvantaged communities?

2039       \*Mr. Bollwage. In my written testimony I talk about the  
2040 cleanup grants, and I also talk about the ability to access  
2041 the dollars and to draw down the money as quickly as  
2042 possible.

2043       \*Ms. Barragan. Okay. Ms. Stoneham, how do brownfield  
2044 grants leverage private-sector investment?

2045       And what happens to those investments if Federal funding  
2046 disappears?

2047       \*Ms. Stoneham. So having access to Federal funding  
2048 makes us \_ makes it easier to attract more private  
2049 investment, especially with the land bank taking that on. It  
2050 saves the developer, frankly, time and money because we are  
2051 willing to take on that responsibility, as opposed to having  
2052 them solely do this by themselves.

2053       \*Ms. Barragan. Thank you. The EPA brownfields program  
2054 is an important program for communities, even in my district  
2055 \_ actually, quite a bit in my district. In Carson,  
2056 California we received \$1.8 million in grants to clean up a  
2057 former oil refinery site so that the Los Angeles Sanitation  
2058 can build a recycled water treatment facility on the  
2059 property. This grant was made possible because of the  
2060 increased brownfields program funding in the Infrastructure  
2061 Law, a law that Democrats fought for and passed, and that I

2062 will remind folks not a single Republican that is currently  
2063 on the Energy and Commerce Committee voted for.

2064 So as we fight back against devastating cuts to the EPA,  
2065 I urge my Republican colleagues to speak up and to defend the  
2066 good work that EPA does for all our communities.

2067 I yield back.

2068 \*Mr. Griffith. The gentlelady yields back. I now  
2069 recognize Representative Pfluger for his five minutes of  
2070 questioning.

2071 \*Mr. Pfluger. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

2072 And Mr. Connaughton, I want to talk to you about  
2073 streamlining. But before I do that I just want to give a  
2074 shout out to Director Zeldin for the good work that he is  
2075 doing to find the fraud, waste, and abuse in these slush  
2076 funds that have gone to fund NGOs and other organizations.  
2077 And I appreciate your answer there previously, you know, on  
2078 the fact that, no, we can still fund brownfield projects and  
2079 look to more efficiently operate our government, and that is  
2080 something that we are focused on.

2081 So in your testimony you talked about approve, build,  
2082 and comply, which I think offers a pretty intriguing  
2083 solution. Can you expand on that concept, and talk about the  
2084 streamlining of permitting and other issues that will help us  
2085 with this topic that we are talking about today?

2086 \*Mr. Connaughton. Yes, Congressman. The concept is

2087 actually very well-practiced, but in a small scale in \_ under  
2088 the banner of permit by rule. There are lots of examples  
2089 where Congress has looked at a very specific issue and  
2090 legislatively approved, you know, the activity to go forward  
2091 while still requiring compliance.

2092         Again, it may be a controversial area, but the border  
2093 wall is an example of that. Bipartisan legislation in 2006  
2094 provided for that, and it allows the Secretary of Homeland  
2095 Security to certify construction and to waive permitting.  
2096 Again, not compliance, but waive permitting. And each  
2097 administration \_ or President Obama, President Trump, and  
2098 then President Biden, each of their homeland security  
2099 directors used that authority.

2100         Recently you had the Congress for the sake of, I think,  
2101 one semiconductor plant \_ and it was critical \_ legislatively  
2102 waiving NEPA, okay? Now, the plant is still complying with  
2103 all the environmental laws. It is still subject to all the  
2104 permitting. It is not just \_ it is not subject to five years  
2105 of waiting around for the environmental review to get done.  
2106 They are just getting on with compliance.

2107         So that has happened in Congress. And at the  
2108 administrative level, at the Federal and state level,  
2109 including in your state and your congressman from  
2110 Pennsylvania, there is actually well-established procedures  
2111 for for automatic permitting, okay? And Texas is the king of

2112 the states when it comes to that. And things move,  
2113 investments happen.

2114 \*Mr. Pfluger. Well, thank you. I may come back to you  
2115 on the state and local coordination there. I want to go to  
2116 Mr. Miller.

2117 When it comes to rural issues, obviously, this is  
2118 important to me, I represent a very rural district but one  
2119 that has a tremendous amount of energy, one that could  
2120 benefit very, very greatly. But we see, you know, more of a,  
2121 I guess an urge to show some \_ to do urban projects, rather  
2122 than rural. So maybe talk to me a little bit about some of  
2123 the barriers that have impacted us in the rural community.

2124 \*Mr. Miller. I am a big believer in our rural areas.  
2125 We have \_ kind of view them as a blank canvas. And a lot of  
2126 people, you know, at least in the Commonwealth of Virginia  
2127 and more urban areas because of urban sprawl and, for  
2128 instance, data centers and construction of them taking up a  
2129 property that could be used for other things that those  
2130 people think would be of more benefit, I think it is an  
2131 amazing opportunity for rural areas, for recruitment of data  
2132 centers and to bring them to those rural areas.

2133 A lot of data centers prefer to be in an area that is  
2134 kind of away, especially when you are talking about  
2135 Department of Defense and in more sensitive-type data  
2136 centers. So I really think a concise effort should be put on

2137 the recruitment of data centers to rural areas. And even,  
2138 you know, through this brownfield funding, you know, maybe a  
2139 set-aside for data centers, preferably for rural data  
2140 centers, but especially for rural or for data center-type  
2141 projects. I think that is the future. I mean, I think we  
2142 all know that, and we have to have the power generation for  
2143 those data centers, which \_ again, brownfields present an  
2144 excellent opportunity for that, especially in rural areas.

2145 \*Mr. Pfluger. So whether rural or urban, these projects  
2146 are beneficial. They help us in a number of ways. But  
2147 specifically on the rural areas, can you talk to us about  
2148 maybe some of the challenges they face when it comes to not  
2149 being able to match funds because we have small communities  
2150 or \_ you know, how do they overcome that?

2151 \*Mr. Miller. Well, and that is one of the items I  
2152 mentioned, of course, with the EPA brownfield fund  
2153 specifically. You know, we talked about more funding from a  
2154 grant standpoint for redevelopment. Not necessarily \_ I  
2155 think they do a wonderful job with the assessment, I love  
2156 this approve, build, comply method that is being discussed.  
2157 But we just need to figure out a way to \_ we can utilize  
2158 matching funds, but we need redevelopment funds from EPA in  
2159 rural areas. We are really good to have a certain pot of  
2160 money, especially state money, for some of this development.  
2161 But you have to have those matching funds.

2162           So again, I mentioned in my opening remarks if we could  
2163   create something maybe that, you know, with some of this  
2164   brownfield funding for rural areas \_ and it can even have a  
2165   match requirement to that, I think everybody is fine with  
2166   that because we can stack. That is what we all do, I think,  
2167   it is what everybody does to make projects work, especially  
2168   at the cost we are looking at for these type of projects.

2169           \*Mr. Pfluger. Thank you.

2170           My time has expired. I yield back.

2171           \*Mr. Griffith. The gentleman yields back. I now  
2172   recognize Mr. Auchincloss, Representative Auchincloss, for  
2173   his five minutes of questions.

2174           \*Mr. Auchincloss. Thank you, Chair.

2175           Mr. Connaughton, I appreciate your proactive and  
2176   prescriptive set of policy proposals for this, and I think it  
2177   might help me to bring it to life to use a specific example  
2178   with you. I represent Massachusetts. We have a lot of  
2179   brownfield sites in Massachusetts, many of them prime spots  
2180   for redevelopment. We also have a big shortage of housing in  
2181   Massachusetts, and challenges with local zoning and land use  
2182   restrictions that make it hard to build the housing that we  
2183   need.

2184           Imagine a circumstance where there was a major  
2185   brownfield site, state owned, or that the locality granted to  
2186   the state, and the state came to you and said we want to

2187 develop this, we want to really build a huge amount of  
2188 housing on this site. We got a big shortage of housing, and  
2189 because it is a brownfield it is \_ we can bypass local  
2190 zoning. In this \_ in the future that you are envisioning in  
2191 your written testimony, talk me through like what that would  
2192 look like, how you would advise them and how you would stack  
2193 private and public capital to make it happen.

2194 \*Mr. Connaughton. So first you need the zoning, okay,  
2195 so it is clear that this is for housing. Okay? That is the  
2196 first gate. So now you have the local suitability.

2197 Second gate, you got to do the assessment. Assessment  
2198 is not that \_ is not expensive, and it doesn't take a lot of  
2199 time, and everyone \_ and people know how to do it now. These  
2200 professionals are sitting here.

2201 \*Mr. Auchincloss. The EPA can pay for that, or do you  
2202 think the state would pay for that?

2203 \*Mr. Connaughton. Well, actually, if I knew as the  
2204 developer that I could actually get through the permitting  
2205 process then \_

2206 \*Mr. Auchincloss. Right.

2207 \*Mr. Connaughton. \_ and get the project up and running  
2208 in under two years, I will pay for the assessment.

2209 \*Mr. Auchincloss. Got it.

2210 \*Mr. Connaughton. Okay? Because it is \_ I am not at  
2211 risk now.

2212           \*Mr. Auchincloss. Yes.

2213           \*Mr. Connaughton. That is the key. If I am a  
2214 developer, I know that I am \_ only 1 in 20 is going to pay  
2215 off. I can't do 20 assessments, but I will pay for the one  
2216 if I know I will actually be able to develop on it. That is  
2217 the key to this process.

2218           \*Mr. Auchincloss. What do you mean by not at risk for  
2219 it? I mean that is true now, isn't it, that they are not at  
2220 risk for it?

2221           \*Mr. Connaughton. So what happens is I get the zoning,  
2222 okay? I then do the \_ I then wait for the assessment, and  
2223 that takes longer than it should. And then, when the  
2224 assessment is done, then I go in and I still don't know if I  
2225 am going to get all of my other permits.

2226           \*Mr. Auchincloss. Oh, I see what you are saying.

2227           \*Mr. Connaughton. That is what I \_ the environmental  
2228 permits. So I distinguish siting and assessment from  
2229 permitting. I still don't know that somebody is not going to  
2230 come in and shut me down, you know, two-thirds of the way  
2231 through my development two-and-a-half years later. That is  
2232 the big problem. That is why \_ again, it is the sites you  
2233 don't see investors show up for that are the ones you should  
2234 be worried about.

2235           \*Mr. Auchincloss. Right.

2236           \*Mr. Connaughton. Because investors will go where they

2237 can get the return on their investment fastest. And for data  
2238 centers, that is certainly the case. If I can't get it up  
2239 and running under a year, I am not interested, okay? And so  
2240 that is the critical step.

2241 \*Mr. Auchincloss. And if the assessment came back as  
2242 showing contaminants \_ again, in your ideal scenario, what  
2243 happens next, provided that the developer and the state are  
2244 still on board with wanting to develop housing?

2245 \*Mr. Connaughton. Well, actually, these great  
2246 professionals have put together - I mean, there is just a  
2247 cookbook for that.

2248 \*Mr. Auchincloss. Yes.

2249 \*Mr. Connaughton. And it is cookie-cutter. Everyone  
2250 knows what they need to do. They know what the thresholds  
2251 are. They know how to do \_ whether you have to cap the site,  
2252 or do some soil removal \_ or put industrial, not housing, so  
2253 you put the industrial on the lightly \_

2254 \*Mr. Auchincloss. Sure.

2255 \*Mr. Connaughton. \_ contaminated locations, and the  
2256 housing on the clean ones.

2257 So that process is now really well \_ I mean, they are  
2258 great at it. And so my view is let the professionals do a  
2259 good job, let them do what they know how to do already.

2260 \*Mr. Auchincloss. And the friction that you identify in  
2261 our current system is that there is not enough pre-approval

2262 of those professionals to just go out and do it?

2263       \*Mr. Connaughton. Yes, just go out and do it. And here  
2264 is the issue. If you imagine that we actually have to do 20  
2265 to 100 X, right, there is no growth of the professional  
2266 government class to be able to keep up with all that  
2267 requirement.

2268       \*Mr. Auchincloss. Right.

2269       \*Mr. Connaughton. We need to let each government  
2270 professional \_ I don't want to lose the government  
2271 professionals. I just want them looking over 100 sites,  
2272 right, and moving 100 sites along, rather than focusing on 1  
2273 or 2, right?

2274       And more importantly, I want them inspecting and  
2275 enforcing against, you know, against the bad guys, who are  
2276 rare, rather than have them focusing on the good guys who  
2277 actually know what they are doing.

2278       \*Mr. Auchincloss. Mayor, did you want to speak to that?

2279       \*Mr. Bollwage. I just want to reinforce his point. We  
2280 had a old plastics factory, and we did the assessment with  
2281 brownfield dollars. And the assessment said you have to  
2282 clean away three feet of the soil and remove that soil, and  
2283 then you could put a Little League field there. If we didn't  
2284 remove the three feet of soil, we would have to put pavement  
2285 there. So we chose to remove the three feet of soil, build  
2286 two Little League fields. And actually, we took the bad soil

2287 and brought it to the site that I described that was the  
2288 mall, where we are preventing the leachate from going into  
2289 what is called the Arthur Kill, the waterway there. So it  
2290 was a win-win for everyone involved.

2291 But once the assessment was done and the plan is there,  
2292 then you can leave it to the mayors or the economic  
2293 development directors to follow up on the next process.

2294 \*Mr. Auchincloss. I yield back, thank you.

2295 \*Mr. Griffith. The gentleman yields back. I now  
2296 recognize Representative Miller-Meeks for her five minutes of  
2297 questioning.

2298 \*Mrs. Miller-Meeks. Thank you, Chairman Griffith and  
2299 Ranking Member Tonko, for holding this important hearing  
2300 today, and I also want to thank our witnesses for testifying  
2301 before this subcommittee.

2302 Iowa, like other states, has abandoned, idled, or under-  
2303 utilized industrial and commercial properties where real or  
2304 perceived environmental contamination hinders redevelopment.  
2305 The brownfields program is essential to helping communities  
2306 address these challenges, turning what were once under-  
2307 utilized and potentially hazardous sites into spaces for  
2308 economic growth, environmental protection, and public health  
2309 improvements.

2310 Mr. Connaughton, your testimony calls for leveraging  
2311 private market forces and certified professionals to enhance

2312 the impact of government programs. How can the EPA better  
2313 integrate private-sector involvement into brownfield  
2314 redevelopment efforts?

2315 And what role can private investment play in  
2316 accelerating the cleanup and redevelopment of these sites?

2317 \*Mr. Connaughton. When it comes to certified  
2318 professionals, the analogy I like to use is taxes. So I  
2319 don't go to my CPA and then tell them what I am expecting to  
2320 earn next year, and having the CPA evaluate it, and then go  
2321 to the IRS and get the permission for me to earn the money  
2322 before I am allowed to pay my taxes. I earn the money, I  
2323 talk to my CPA, the CPA assesses, you know, what the taxes  
2324 should be. I then send that to the IRS, okay? And then, if  
2325 I cheated or lied, they come after me.

2326 And so I see this the same way. We have this incredible  
2327 class of private-sector professionals now who have \_ you  
2328 know, who are \_ almost all of whom are certified to do the  
2329 legal work, the biological work, the engineering work to  
2330 provide full assurance of environmental and public health and  
2331 safety, just like OSHA. By the way, OSHA doesn't give you  
2332 permits. You build your plant and OSHA comes in and inspects  
2333 and enforces afterwards.

2334 So if we apply the same thing to the environmental  
2335 regime, this is what can unleash speed. When you unleash  
2336 speed, you unleash money, okay? You know, if I have got a

2337 dollar to spend, and I can get that dollar back in a year, I  
2338 am going to go there versus I have a dollar to spend and I  
2339 get \$0.20 back in 5 years, okay? It is just economics. And  
2340 speed is everything. And if I can put my \_ if I am going to  
2341 put my money into a software company, and I am going to see  
2342 it in two years, and I know my same money in an  
2343 infrastructure project is seven or eight years away, where is  
2344 my money going to go? It is going to go to the software  
2345 company.

2346 \*Mrs. Miller-Meeks. Thank you. And you addressed  
2347 permitting and approval, so I won't ask that question.

2348 Mr. Bollwage, you mentioned in your testimony the use of  
2349 multi-purpose grants and the restrictive view the EPA has  
2350 taken of their use. In past hearings, witnesses have  
2351 testified on the benefits of using this program to revitalize  
2352 economic opportunity or construct affordable housing. Is  
2353 flexibility a strength for the program?

2354 And can you explain how the restricted view EPA has  
2355 regarding these grants has made it more difficult for  
2356 communities with several brownfield properties?

2357 \*Mr. Bollwage. Well, the multi-purpose grants, as you  
2358 said, creates flexibility, and that is something we pushed  
2359 for in the 2018 reauthorization. And we are extremely  
2360 grateful for that. And it also helps with some of the other  
2361 witnesses we are talking about with rural communities and

2362 those communities with a lot less population. And those  
2363 grants, the multi-purpose grants, clearly gives a leg up to  
2364 those communities.

2365       \*Mrs. Miller-Meeks. Mr. Miller, you mentioned that for  
2366 every Federal dollar invested in brownfields cleanup,  
2367 communities see an average return of \$20 in economic  
2368 activity. Can you elaborate on how these economic returns  
2369 are measured?

2370       And are there specific success stories from southwestern  
2371 Virginia or other rural areas that highlight the long-term  
2372 economic benefits of the brownfields program?

2373       \*Mr. Miller. Absolutely. I mentioned, I believe,  
2374 earlier to a previous question Project Intersection, which is  
2375 in Norton, Virginia. We were able to, you know, turn a small  
2376 amount of brownfield funding into close to \$35 million in  
2377 investment to develop that industrial site. So that number  
2378 is actually an EPA figure.

2379       And I would probably say, at least in the coal fields,  
2380 it would be a whole lot higher in terms of what the return is  
2381 that we receive.

2382       \*Mrs. Miller-Meeks. Thank you. You also highlighted  
2383 that the brownfield redevelopment creates over 10 jobs per  
2384 100,000. And how are these jobs being allocated? And what  
2385 steps can be taken to ensure that displaced rural workers, to  
2386 Representative Pfluger's comment, as well as younger

2387 generations in these communities are able to access these  
2388 opportunities?

2389       \*Mr. Miller. And that is an issue we deal with. It is  
2390 a nut we haven't cracked yet because of limited population of  
2391 a working age.

2392       You know, we will create new job opportunities. A lot  
2393 of times people in their current position will move, as we  
2394 all would, to a position with better compensation. So that  
2395 is an issue we are dealing with.

2396       What we are hoping to see and what we have started to  
2397 notice to see in our rural area, especially after COVID, is  
2398 we are finally seeing for the first time, though a small  
2399 amount, at least some in-migration coming into our rural  
2400 areas from more urban areas. And so we certainly, when those  
2401 people do come to the area, we want to be able to have things  
2402 in place that they can make a living and prosper.

2403       \*Mrs. Miller-Meeks. Thank you.

2404       My time has expired. I yield back.

2405       \*Mr. Griffith. The gentlelady yields back. I now  
2406 recognize Mr. Menendez for his five minutes of questioning.

2407       \*Mr. Menendez. Thank you, Chairman. Thank you, Ranking  
2408 Member.

2409       Mayor Bollwage, as I mentioned earlier, I am grateful  
2410 for your national leadership on the Brownfields Task Force,  
2411 as well as your work back home in Elizabeth. In your tenure

2412 as mayor, you have taken on the challenges posed by  
2413 Elizabeth's industrial history head on, and you serve as a  
2414 national leader in advancing brownfield remediation.

2415 Mayor, can you share some examples of how the  
2416 brownfields program has supported Elizabeth's economic  
2417 development and environmental well-being, especially those  
2418 examples that you are most proud of?

2419 \*Mr. Bollwage. Well, Congressman, thank you very much.  
2420 Thank you for your kind comments, as well.

2421 The one that we are all familiar with that I testified  
2422 here is the mills at Jersey Gardens, which I spoke about  
2423 earlier, a 200-acre landfill that is \_ now has 2 million  
2424 square feet of economic development with hotels and  
2425 restaurants, as well as the 5,000 construction jobs.

2426 Another one is the HOPE VI program. In 1999 we took two  
2427 outdated public housing projects and recreated them into new  
2428 HOPE VI housing. Not only some market rate housing, but also  
2429 some mostly affordable housing.

2430 We are currently developing around the train station,  
2431 which you visited not long ago, where we have taken a lot of  
2432 vacant land and have developed housing, part of the \_ working  
2433 with the Brownfield Development Association \_ New Jersey  
2434 Brownfield Development. New Jersey Transit committed \$70  
2435 million to a new train station that has helped the economic  
2436 development, as well.

2437 Harbor Front Villas was another project on the  
2438 waterfront that has created market rate housing. So those  
2439 are three of the projects, plus the Little League field that  
2440 I just mentioned, as well, and we developed some neighborhood  
2441 gas stations now into small public uses.

2442 \*Mr. Menendez. So in short, you \_ it is fair to say  
2443 that the brownfields program has helped transform Elizabeth.

2444 \*Mr. Bollwage. Well, it has created an awful lot of  
2445 economic development, as well as jobs and tax ratables.

2446 \*Mr. Menendez. I appreciate that, because I want to  
2447 talk about, in addition to all the projects that you just  
2448 mentioned, last year Groundwork Elizabeth received a \$500,000  
2449 job training grant from the brownfields program to train 75  
2450 students and place 40 environmental jobs. I think you have  
2451 alluded to it earlier. But Mayor, can you provide an update  
2452 on Groundwork Elizabeth's grant?

2453 \*Mr. Bollwage. So the Groundwork Elizabeth grant would  
2454 go towards \_ well, as you know, Congressman, we are a densely  
2455 populated community, and we have worked diligently to  
2456 identify resources in order to address brownfields and  
2457 economic development. The mills at Jersey Gardens is one  
2458 area.

2459 But getting into this specific issue, Groundwork  
2460 Elizabeth has worked with the housing authority in our city,  
2461 they have worked with other non-profits, they have worked to

2462 develop job training for young people. This proposal  
2463 generated almost \$1 million award from the National Science  
2464 Foundation for air quality monitoring walks that we are doing  
2465 in partnership with Rutgers University.

2466 I say this, that not only is the brownfields grant  
2467 responsible for that, but it has generated money from Rutgers  
2468 University and other areas in order to work on air pollution  
2469 issues, being a hub of transportation where the City of  
2470 Elizabeth sits in the state of New Jersey.

2471 \*Mr. Menendez. Yes, absolutely. And Groundwork \_ and I  
2472 appreciate you having me in with Senator Booker to speak with  
2473 them directly about the work that they are doing.

2474 And with respect to that specific grant, my  
2475 understanding is that it is currently being delayed, the  
2476 funding that was appropriated, the \$500,000. Is that  
2477 accurate?

2478 \*Mr. Bollwage. So actually, as I told Congressman  
2479 Pallone earlier, I was on the train on the way here this  
2480 morning at 6:40, and I was informed that the grant has been  
2481 held up based on chaos.

2482 \*Mr. Menendez. Yes, it is disappointing, because it  
2483 would have put students to work, it would have helped  
2484 facilitate the remediation of New Jersey's brownfields, and  
2485 it would have connected folks to good-paying jobs, which I  
2486 think is such a bipartisan set of accomplishments that we

2487 could have been doing right now, but is held up because of  
2488 President Trump's unconstitutional funding freeze, preventing  
2489 congressionally authorized grants from reaching the  
2490 communities that we all represent. And it is obviously  
2491 disruptive to the things that we all want to make progress  
2492 on.

2493         So Mayor Bollwage, just \_ if I could ask you a yes-or-  
2494 no question, in your experience has EPA staff provided  
2495 Elizabeth and other communities with valuable technical  
2496 assistance related to brownfield remediation?

2497         \*Mr. Bollwage. In my 33 years as a mayor, we have  
2498 worked very closely with the EPA under Democratic and  
2499 Republican administrations in order to benefit my community.

2500         \*Mr. Menendez. Yes, I mean, they \_ the staff does an  
2501 incredible job. We need to fund the EPA and make sure that  
2502 we don't have staffing cuts so we can continue the incredible  
2503 work that you have testified here today. Thank you for your  
2504 leadership. It is a real privilege to call you a partner and  
2505 a friend.

2506         And with that I yield back.

2507         \*Mr. Griffith. The gentleman yields back. I now  
2508 recognize Mr. Evans for five minutes of questioning.

2509         \*Mr. Evans. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to  
2510 the ranking member and, of course, to our witnesses for  
2511 taking the time today. My first question is actually to Ms.

2512 Stoneham.

2513           In a previous life I was the code enforcement supervisor  
2514 for a local municipality. And in that capacity one of the  
2515 biggest headaches that I had to deal with was either  
2516 abandoned or defunct commercial or industrial properties  
2517 within the city that attracted just a lot of \_ you know, in  
2518 local parlance they were problem properties. We had one  
2519 particular one where it became the de facto dumping ground  
2520 for anybody that didn't want to pay to dispose of a sofa.  
2521 And so in one week we had 46 different sofas that were dumped  
2522 behind this building that the city had to go pay to remove.

2523           And in your testimony you mentioned that many of these  
2524 properties that are either in the brownfield program or  
2525 potentially viable for that program are owned by absentee  
2526 landlords or tangled in legal and financial complications  
2527 that make redevelopment nearly impossible. And so that was  
2528 something that I personally interacted with, trying to,  
2529 again, police up these \_ some of these abandoned properties.

2530           And so the first question to you is, is there any way in  
2531 how the EPA administers the brownfield program that we could  
2532 address some of these obstacles to redevelopment for those  
2533 properties where you have either an absentee landlord or it  
2534 is tangled up in some sort of legal proceedings because it is  
2535 a defunct company, and potentially that property and that  
2536 building is the most valuable asset that that entity still

2537 owns?

2538           \*Ms. Stoneham. Thank you for acknowledging that  
2539 statement, and for your previous service.

2540           For that particular portion of my testimony I was  
2541 referring to one of the powers that land banks have, which  
2542 makes this unique and special, which is clearing up some of  
2543 those clouded title issues, some of the heirship property  
2544 issues. But also, most of the time those properties are  
2545 abandoned, tax delinquent, or non-tax-generating properties  
2546 that are also brownfields.

2547           So I am not sure exactly if the EPA can get involved  
2548 with that particular lane, but I was just sharing that the  
2549 land bank makes us unique in being able to address additional  
2550 powers outside of just the typical contamination or the  
2551 assessment with the brownfields program.

2552           \*Mr. Evans. So the land banks do have some special play  
2553 in spaces where you have a property that is tangled up in  
2554 some of those issues?

2555           \*Ms. Stoneham. Correct. Different land banks have  
2556 different powers. Specifically in Texas, we have the ability  
2557 to request foreclosed properties at any point in the process,  
2558 and we are currently navigating that process with our county  
2559 and our city leadership so we can help to intervene some of  
2560 those problems, in addition to the contamination potential  
2561 issues, as well.

2562           \*Mr. Evans.   Awesome, got it.   Thank you.

2563           Mr. Mayor, thank you for coming.   Next question to you.

2564   You mentioned mothballed properties.   Again, in our city we  
2565   call them problem properties.   I am just curious, can you  
2566   speak to any barriers that you have seen between this program  
2567   and then actually getting those boots-on-the-ground resources  
2568   to local governments?

2569           \*Mr. Bollwage.   First of all, I really appreciate your  
2570   story, by the way, because I live that every day with staff  
2571   members.

2572           So the mothball properties usually is dealing with  
2573   absentee landlords, and people aren't involved in the  
2574   property, and that is probably the bigger struggle.   The  
2575   brownfields and the incentives, if we can get site control,  
2576   we can move some of these mothballed properties back to the  
2577   tax rolls.

2578           \*Mr. Evans.   Thank you.

2579           And then, Mr. Miller, a question for you kind of going  
2580   off of that same vein, just the liability concerns that exist  
2581   in these spaces.   Can you talk about ways that we might be  
2582   able to either reduce the liability or assuage some of the  
2583   concerns for the landlords to be able to get additional  
2584   properties into a program like this to be able to revitalize  
2585   for additional industry or commercial uses?

2586           \*Mr. Miller.   Sure.   In our region, most of the

2587 brownfield development is at a much larger scale for economic  
2588 development projects.

2589 But in our downtowns - and keep in mind, most of our  
2590 towns are a population between 50 and 1,000, so small. And  
2591 most of those towns maybe have one \_ in the downtown district  
2592 one land or one person that owns a lot of that property. So  
2593 what we have been able to do with that, though, is through  
2594 assessment and then through the implementation of,  
2595 essentially, tearing down a lot of the facilities, and then  
2596 creating an opportunity for them to rebuild a better  
2597 structure.

2598 \*Mr. Evans. And so that is intriguing to me. The  
2599 district that I represent, my largest municipality is almost  
2600 150,000 folks, and then I go down, same thing, to small  
2601 municipalities that don't even have their own police  
2602 department. So can you speak to \_ specifically to anything  
2603 that you have seen in that space with those smaller  
2604 localities that is working for you?

2605 \*Mr. Miller. People working together. I mean, really,  
2606 I mean, that is one of the things \_ a lot of times,  
2607 especially in a rural area, people may be uncomfortable even  
2608 with the word "brownfield," because they are not familiar  
2609 with it. So really, essentially, people working together,  
2610 the landowner, people in the position that you once found  
2611 yourself in, you know, some of the building officials, and

2612 everybody working together.

2613 And again \_

2614 \*Mr. Evans. Thank you.

2615 \*Mr. Miller. \_ that is probably a difference between a  
2616 small, rural area and a larger, urban area.

2617 \*Mr. Evans. Thank you.

2618 I yield back.

2619 \*Mr. Griffith. The gentleman yields back. I appreciate  
2620 that and now recognize Mr. Landsman for his five minutes of  
2621 questions.

2622 \*Mr. Landsman. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you  
2623 for this hearing. Incredibly important, the brownfield  
2624 program has been a huge game-changer for folks and  
2625 communities back in southwest Ohio. We have done so much  
2626 redevelopment work with this program.

2627 And so I \_ three sets of questions as we are sort of  
2628 wrapping up here, and I will ask them across the board.  
2629 Answer them as you see fit. But one is a question about, as  
2630 we look to reauthorize, what are the big changes? I have  
2631 heard a few of them, but I am just \_ I am curious if you had  
2632 to, you know, pick the top two or three, what are the top two  
2633 or three big changes that you want us to focus on?

2634 Two, the state's role has come up, and I am curious what  
2635 that looks like, or what it should look like. And I \_ Mr.  
2636 Miller, in particular, when we have these communities that

2637 struggle to get the private investment, is that a role for  
2638 the state to play? I mean, is \_ am I jumping to the wrong  
2639 conclusion? I am just curious in terms of what role the  
2640 state is or isn't playing, but should be playing.

2641 And then, finally, it \_ we just can't not talk about the  
2642 EPA stuff, because it is a huge problem. If you would just  
2643 talk a little bit about the funding freeze, and the cuts, and  
2644 how you would want us to approach this, you know, what you  
2645 would like to see the United States Congress do as it relates  
2646 to this program and the withholding of grants.

2647 So three questions. We will start with the big changes,  
2648 the role of the state, and then the EPA cuts and funding  
2649 freezes.

2650 \*Mr. Connaughton. The most important thing you can do  
2651 is look at this opportunity at scale. The program has crept  
2652 its way up to tens of thousands, but it is 100,000 \_ you  
2653 know, a hundreds of thousands opportunity. So I would work  
2654 backwards from how do we get almost all of it redeveloped,  
2655 and put together a suite of programs of which the EPA piece  
2656 is just one \_ one important, but just one \_ aspect.

2657 Speed. So automatic permitting, however you come up  
2658 with it. Legislative, so we are not tied up in courts  
2659 forever. The money will flood into these communities,  
2660 believe me, because the sites are so great.

2661 And then, for states, states are \_

2662           \*Mr. Landsman. I would call it \_ just because I think  
2663 this came up \_ presumptive permitting, which is that you get  
2664 it, and then \_

2665           \*Mr. Connaughton. Yes.

2666           \*Mr. Landsman. Yes, okay. Sorry, keep going.

2667           \*Mr. Connaughton. That is right. And then, for states  
2668 \_ as it turns out, states, by the way, do most of the  
2669 permitting, including delegated programs, and states want  
2670 this freedom because they know what they want to do, they are  
2671 close to their communities. That is why Texas is so good at  
2672 this, okay? And you know, if it works, it works. And they  
2673 still have \_

2674           \*Mr. Weber. Could you say that again? Texas is what?

2675           [Laughter.]

2676           \*Mr. Connaughton. Texas is so good at this, and they  
2677 ensure environmental compliance.

2678           \*Mr. Landsman. Yes.

2679           \*Mr. Connaughton. So, you know, we should be competing  
2680 with them.

2681           \*Mr. Landsman. Yes.

2682           \*Mr. Bollwage. Congressman, naturally, more money has  
2683 got to be the top of the category. And, you know, we talked  
2684 about caps set at \$10 million for cleanup and multi-purpose  
2685 grants.

2686           One of our Congress members, Mikie Sherrill, has

2687 introduced a bill along with Mike Turner, who is in Ohio.  
2688 Mike used to be a co-chair with me on the U.S. Conference of  
2689 Mayors Brownfields Task Force way back when. And, you know,  
2690 they have a bipartisan tax incentive bill. That bill would  
2691 be helpful, along with reauthorization of this. It is called  
2692 H.R. 815, it allows companies to expense their cleanup costs  
2693 in the year that it incurred. So those issues would be  
2694 important and helpful.

2695 As far as the state goes, you know, I have worked really  
2696 well with the State of New Jersey, and I think that often  
2697 depends on the relationship between mayors and governors.

2698 \*Mr. Landsman. And the freeze.

2699 \*Mr. Bollwage. And the freeze, of course, yes.

2700 \*Mr. Landsman. I mean, is there something you want this  
2701 Congress to do?

2702 \*Mr. Bollwage. Well, I am curious to know why \_ and I  
2703 don't mean to be a smart ass, but why are we spending four  
2704 hours here if we are not going to have any funding and people  
2705 to eventually execute what we are doing here?

2706 \*Mr. Landsman. That is a good question.

2707 \*Ms. Stoneham. In terms of the changes, I absolutely  
2708 will echo more resources.

2709 But also, could there be more flexibility for  
2710 acquisition funds? We can't even use the assessment dollars  
2711 or cleanup dollars if you don't have site control. So if

2712 there could be a line item to where you can also use dollars  
2713 for acquisition, it would be a game-changer.

2714 In terms of the states' role, Texas is awesome. But I  
2715 would also say if there could be a streamlined approach to  
2716 make sure we are not working in silos \_ because depending on  
2717 if you are talking to the TCEQ, the Texas Railroad  
2718 Commission, it kind of just depends on which program is  
2719 applicable.

2720 And then, of course, just making sure that we are able  
2721 to access the technical experts to help us spend the dollars.

2722 \*Mr. Landsman. I am out of time. And out of respect to  
2723 the chair and the rest of the committee, I yield back.  
2724 Sorry.

2725 \*Mr. Griffith. We will get Duane's answer later, when  
2726 the Texas delegation is talking again. I now recognize Mrs.  
2727 Fedorchak for her four \_ for her five minutes of questioning.

2728 \*Mrs. Fedorchak. Excellent. Well, good afternoon. I  
2729 think it is afternoon now. Thank you all for your expertise.  
2730 This is a fascinating subject, and I would love to spend 10  
2731 minutes talking to each of you about this, but we have a very  
2732 limited time so I am really going to zero in on the AI issues  
2733 here.

2734 I agree with Mr. Connaughton that this could \_ AI could  
2735 drive or power the fourth industrial revolution in our  
2736 country. But in order to do that, we need to power AI. And

2737 meeting the energy demands of this business are \_ that is a  
2738 substantial challenge for our country. It is why I launched  
2739 an AI and Energy Working Group this week, and invite you all  
2740 to participate. We initiated an RFI seeking information, so  
2741 I hope you all will participate in that.

2742 Mr. Connaughton, you have particularly piqued my  
2743 interest with your thoughts on permitting reform. I spent 12  
2744 years permitting on the \_ as an environmental permitter in my  
2745 state, as a state utility commissioner, and so I have a  
2746 decent amount of experience in that. You mentioned this idea  
2747 of certifying a third-party expert's site assessments. That  
2748 is brilliant. What is preventing this from happening more  
2749 broadly?

2750 \*Mr. Connaughton. What is preventing it is not  
2751 accepting the fruits of their labor.

2752 \*Mrs. Fedorchak. In law, Federal law?

2753 \*Mr. Connaughton. In law.

2754 \*Mrs. Fedorchak. Okay.

2755 \*Mr. Connaughton. Because they do the work, they  
2756 certify it, they are liable, you know \_

2757 \*Mrs. Fedorchak. Yes.

2758 \*Mr. Connaughton. \_ professionally, if they are  
2759 cheating or lying, like CPAs. And then we spend five years  
2760 working to agree with them.

2761 \*Mrs. Fedorchak. Okay.

2762           \*Mr. Connaughton. So my view is let's put the private  
2763 sector professionals that we have trained to work, and let's  
2764 accept the fruits of their work.

2765           \*Mrs. Fedorchak. Great. I love that. In my state,  
2766 once an area has been permitted or certified to be safe for  
2767 construction, you can rebuild in that same site without going  
2768 through permitting again. So it is kind of the same type  
2769 of \_

2770           \*Mr. Connaughton. You had also mentioned \_ because you  
2771 are a former regulator \_ when we have a major storm, the  
2772 utilities are incredible at rebuilding as fast as humanly  
2773 possible.

2774           \*Mrs. Fedorchak. True.

2775           \*Mr. Connaughton. It is the same process. It is the  
2776 same people. They know what they are doing. They know how  
2777 to comply. And we are so overjoyed when the electricity  
2778 system is stood back up in 48 hours. If we want to build new  
2779 infrastructure \_ four years, five years, six years \_

2780           \*Mrs. Fedorchak. Right.

2781           \*Mr. Connaughton. \_ why don't we take the example of  
2782 our emergencies, and make that standard practice?

2783           \*Mrs. Fedorchak. Mm-hmm, and the same on your NEPA  
2784 idea, on the unquantified environmental impacts. So I will  
2785 be following up on those, and I am sure many of my colleagues  
2786 will be, as well.

2787           I wanted to zero in a little bit more on your  
2788 interconnection proposal, the six-month window. That is the  
2789 only area where I think you might be a little overly  
2790 optimistic, having gone through a lot of that on the MISO  
2791 level, the interconnection queues and the studies required.  
2792 So talk a little bit more about what you envision there, and  
2793 how much your vision is tied to actual experience trying to  
2794 go through those interconnection processes.

2795           \*Mr. Connaughton. So having suffered through this  
2796 wearing many different hats over 35 years, there is only a  
2797 technological solution to the interconnection problem. So we  
2798 have to get on with applying the AI and the hardware systems,  
2799 and the RTOs currently aren't funded and their business model  
2800 isn't set up to do it that way.

2801           So I really believe that is the only way through this,  
2802 and our target has to be six months because we have to build  
2803 at the need of speed.

2804           \*Mrs. Fedorchak. So using AI to help them run their  
2805 studies faster when they are -

2806           \*Mr. Connaughton. Yes, because they are operating 12,  
2807 15, 16 different spreadsheet models. And it was one thing  
2808 when you were, like, you know, attaching dozens or hundreds  
2809 of projects. We are going to be attaching thousands or tens  
2810 of thousands of projects. Just the raw \_ just the labor of  
2811 doing that, we can't keep up. The technology is going to

2812 solve our problem, but we are 10 years behind in applying it.

2813       \*Mrs. Fedorchak. And have you talked to any of the  
2814 grid -

2815       \*Mr. Connaughton. Yes.

2816       \*Mrs. Fedorchak. \_ any of them? Which ones are open to  
2817 this?

2818       \*Mr. Connaughton. Stay tuned for an interesting  
2819 announcement that is coming. I can't say anything further on  
2820 that.

2821       \*Mrs. Fedorchak. Okay, very good. Then just with my  
2822 remaining one minute, I would like you \_ and others, if they  
2823 have time \_ to elaborate on what else should we be doing to  
2824 stay ahead? Because I am really worried that we are going to  
2825 be falling behind China in our ability to really meet the  
2826 energy demands of this industry.

2827       So Mr. Connaughton, if you could start.

2828       \*Mr. Connaughton. Really focus on the communities that  
2829 actually want to build. So let's put a priority where people  
2830 actually want to do something. We spent a lot of time trying  
2831 to work in areas where people just don't want to see the  
2832 construction, so I would start there. Start with yes, and  
2833 create a competition for outcomes, rather than work with all  
2834 the problem children.

2835       \*Mrs. Fedorchak. Twenty seconds. Anybody else?

2836       \*Mr. Griffith. Duane Miller wants to say he will take

2837 all those places.

2838 \*Mr. Miller. You actually read my mind. Any rural area  
2839 with specific interests in southwest Virginia, yes.

2840 \*Mrs. Fedorchak. And North Dakota.

2841 \*Mr. Miller. Yes. Yes, ma'am.

2842 \*Mrs. Fedorchak. All right, thank you.

2843 I yield back.

2844 \*Mr. Griffith. The gentlelady yields back. I now  
2845 recognize Mr. Carter for his five minutes of questioning.

2846 \*Mr. Carter of Louisiana. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and  
2847 thank you to all of our witnesses for being here today.

2848 The EPA brownfield program revitalizes communities by  
2849 transforming contaminated properties into economic assets.  
2850 It attracts private investment, creates jobs, and boosts  
2851 local tax revenues through funding and technical assistance  
2852 for the assessment, cleanup, and redevelopment of potentially  
2853 contaminated former commercial industrial sites. This  
2854 transformation eliminates environmental hazards and  
2855 stimulates economic activity, benefiting businesses and  
2856 residents. This is critically important.

2857 A prime example of this type of development is the  
2858 recent \$2 million award of an EPA brownfield cleanup program  
2859 grant for the City of New Orleans to support the  
2860 environmental remediation of the former Naval Support  
2861 Activity Complex in the downtown Bywater neighborhood. This

2862 vast, now vacant complex, completed in 1919 by the United  
2863 States Navy, formerly served as a logistics station for the  
2864 Port of New Orleans and the military training site.  
2865 Deactivated and sold to the City of New Orleans in 2011 for  
2866 redevelopment, it comprises some 84,000 square-foot 6 story  
2867 buildings and on about a 1.5 million square-foot site.  
2868 Thanks in large to the EPA brownfield funding, the complex is  
2869 now being redeveloped to create mixed-use development with  
2870 295 affordable residential units and ground floor retail  
2871 space, including a grocery store and \_ as the primary  
2872 retailer.

2873         Ms. Stoneham, since taking office, President Trump has  
2874 pledged to cut funding to EPA by 65 percent, undertaking  
2875 significant indiscriminate staff firings, and terminated  
2876 congressionally-appropriated EPA grant funding to local  
2877 recipients. Can you tell us how the current atmosphere of  
2878 the uncertainty impacts the EPA brownfield programs, awards,  
2879 and projects now underway in your home of Houston?

2880         \*Ms. Stoneham. Absolutely. It has significantly  
2881 impacted our project timeline and us being able to release  
2882 procurement opportunities. It also reduces the potential for  
2883 more training opportunities not just for my staff and the  
2884 contractors that we work with, but also community members who  
2885 directly want to better understand how they can receive  
2886 access to funding allocations and just being able to see how

2887 they can amplify what they want to directly do in their  
2888 neighborhoods.

2889         And then just the relationships that we built of working  
2890 with our grant officer, the chemist that we talked to that  
2891 reviews the reports on a regular basis just so we can  
2892 continue the work that we are doing and also continue to  
2893 pursue more funding opportunities.

2894         \*Mr. Carter of Louisiana. Mayor Bollwage, I began my  
2895 career in local government, serving on the New Orleans City  
2896 Council many years ago. So I understand and appreciate the  
2897 incredible job that you have to do as a mayor and your  
2898 employees do with limited resources. What would gutting our  
2899 career workforce at EPA, including those at the brownfield  
2900 program who provide technical assistance, mean to your  
2901 municipal employees in the City of Elizabeth who partner with  
2902 EPA to carry out these projects?

2903         \*Mr. Bollwage. So we are a very urban, dense community.  
2904 And taking the EPA away from our city, which has the largest  
2905 port on the East Coast, the second largest in the country,  
2906 air pollution issues, brownfield issues, economic development  
2907 issues, without having the EPA as a partner we run the risk  
2908 of higher pollution and less availability of vacant land to  
2909 develop.

2910         \*Mr. Carter of Louisiana. Ms. Stoneham, without the EPA  
2911 brownfields program, would the projects listed in your

2912 testimony still be vacant, blighted eyesores in our  
2913 community?

2914       \*Ms. Stoneham. Absolutely. The trash incinerator site  
2915 was abandoned for 60 years, and I strongly believe it would  
2916 continue to still be abandoned and wouldn't have a partner to  
2917 step up to take on the complex measure of having over 40 feet  
2918 of trash incinerator site currently still there.

2919       \*Mr. Carter of Louisiana. Mr. Mayor Bollwage, in your  
2920 opinion, should we keep the funding of EPA brownfield in its  
2921 current level? And without it, what happens in your  
2922 communities?

2923       \*Mr. Bollwage. Well, I am always looking for more.

2924       \*Mr. Carter of Louisiana. So cutting it is not \_

2925       \*Mr. Bollwage. Cutting is not \_ cutting it should not  
2926 be an option.

2927       \*Mr. Carter of Louisiana. Would you agree that it is  
2928 counterproductive in that we actually lose money, and not  
2929 gain money by making these kind of ill-thought cuts?

2930       \*Mr. Bollwage. We heard testimony from Mr. Miller  
2931 earlier that every dollar of the brownfields generates \$20 in  
2932 additional funding.

2933       \*Mr. Carter of Louisiana. And that doesn't sound very  
2934 efficient, and we are talking about an effort from DOGE to be  
2935 more efficient, to cut waste, fraud, and abuse. If you are  
2936 putting in a dollar but you are getting 20 back, that seems

2937 pretty efficient to me.

2938       \*Mr. Bollwage. It is extremely efficient for local  
2939 governments because we have the ability not only to generate  
2940 tax revenue, but also jobs, which then creates more income  
2941 tax, et cetera.

2942       \*Mr. Carter of Louisiana. Thank you, Mr. Mayor.

2943       My time is exceeded, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

2944       \*Mr. Griffith. The gentleman yields back. I now  
2945 recognize the gentleman from Texas for his five minutes of  
2946 questions.

2947       \*Mr. Weber. About time.

2948       [Laughter.]

2949       \*Mr. Weber. Okay. So we are going to have fun here.  
2950 So how many sites, total sites, in the country? We will  
2951 start down here on the left. Is it \_ say \_ Connaught?

2952       \*Mr. Connaughton. Connaughton, thank you.

2953       \*Mr. Weber. Connaughton. I can do this. How many  
2954 sites in the United States would you say there are,  
2955 brownfields?

2956       \*Mr. Connaughton. More than 400,000.

2957       \*Mr. Weber. Four hundred thousand. Would you agree,  
2958 Mr. Connaughton, that when we have got almost a \$37 trillion  
2959 deficit, that we ought to be focused on reducing that in as  
2960 many ways as possible?

2961       \*Mr. Connaughton. Addressing the deficit is one of the

2962 most \_ that and national security are the two most important  
2963 priorities for America, in my personal view.

2964 \*Mr. Weber. Would you agree with that, Mayor?

2965 \*Mr. Bollwage. You know, I \_ in a way, yes, but we  
2966 recycle everything else. We need to start recycling our  
2967 land.

2968 \*Mr. Weber. Ms. Stoneham, would you agree?

2969 \*Ms. Stoneham. Yes.

2970 \*Mr. Weber. We need to work on \_ Mr. Miller?

2971 \*Mr. Miller. Yes.

2972 \*Mr. Weber. Okay. So the average \_ looking at sites \_  
2973 and you all may know the answer to this question or not \_  
2974 what is the \_ do we know the acreage of every single site?  
2975 Do we have that in our database, the size of the site, of the  
2976 brownfield site?

2977 \*Mr. Bollwage. If I may, Congressman, I believe the  
2978 local governments and the state governments would have that  
2979 information.

2980 \*Mr. Weber. Right.

2981 \*Mr. Bollwage. I am not aware of a national database.

2982 \*Mr. Weber. Sure. Well, Texas's Commission on  
2983 Environmental Quality says there is 207 brownfield sites in  
2984 Texas. In my home district along the Gulf Coast we have 10  
2985 sites. So the EPA is working with getting the word out.

2986 So, Mr. Connaughton, I think you talked about businesses

2987 being willing to get in there and redo this as quickly as  
2988 possible if we can get the permitting process low. Does the  
2989 EPA send out regular emails, letters? How do they get the  
2990 word out to potential businesses?

2991 Mr. Connaughton, I will come back to you if you know  
2992 that, about \_ there was some \_ there \_ is that possible, you  
2993 know, business to be done here?

2994 \*Mr. Connaughton. I think the answer is there is  
2995 hundreds of different ways all of this gets communicated  
2996 Federal, state, and locally. And it is a hodge podge. But  
2997 it is now coalescing into this understanding of 400,000 sites  
2998 at different points.

2999 And maybe to get a jump on your point, which is we can  
3000 and should sustain the EPA contribution to this effort, but I  
3001 want to see all 400,000 addressed.

3002 \*Mr. Weber. Yes, but we have to do them in order of  
3003 ones that yield the most economic benefit.

3004 \*Mr. Connaughton. Exactly, exactly.

3005 \*Mr. Weber. Do we do that, Mayor? Has that been your  
3006 experience?

3007 \*Mr. Bollwage. In my experience, yes, Congressman. I  
3008 mean, the landfill was causing health issues in our  
3009 community. And not only did we take away the health issue,  
3010 we generated economic development through jobs, as well as  
3011 open space.

3012           \*Mr. Weber. And you see that in Houston. I grew up in  
3013 Houston, lived in a 20-mile radius, 71 years. September of  
3014 2023 I brought this up at the last hearing on brownfields. I  
3015 would be remiss if I don't bring it up again. The cleanup  
3016 site of the site that Daikin or \_ Daikin Park, formerly known  
3017 as Minute Maid, right, Minute Maid Park, now sits on the home  
3018 of the Astros, a success story. Not every brownfield site  
3019 will be lucky in something like that. But would you hazard a  
3020 guess \_ or how long have you been doing this? Let me ask you  
3021 that, Ms. Stoneham.

3022           \*Ms. Stoneham. I have been president for three years.  
3023 Formerly I was a board member, so I have been in this  
3024 industry \_

3025           \*Mr. Weber. Okay.

3026           \*Ms. Stoneham. \_ for about 15.

3027           \*Mr. Weber. So what was the impact of the redevelopment  
3028 of that for the Houston \_ town of Houston? Do you have those  
3029 figures, when they went \_

3030           \*Ms. Stoneham. I don't necessarily have the numbers,  
3031 but I am happy to follow up with that. But I will say just  
3032 the resurgence of downtown with significant developments such  
3033 as the former Minute Maid Park \_

3034           \*Mr. Weber. Right.

3035           \*Ms. Stoneham. \_ has created more housing  
3036 opportunities, job opportunities, and just overall commercial

3037 redevelopment.

3038           \*Mr. Weber. I am going to assume \_ and Mr. Miller, you  
3039 \_ I think you said something earlier about maybe it being \_  
3040 those being prime areas for nuclear in some instances in your  
3041 comments, or did I miss that?

3042           \*Mr. Miller. No, that is correct. We actually \_ as I  
3043 mentioned, we identified seven sites in our region. Six of  
3044 the seven were brownfields, and all seven scored very highly  
3045 in the industry standard.

3046           \*Mr. Weber. Now, that is in your Commonwealth of  
3047 Virginia, correct?

3048           \*Mr. Miller. That is just within southwest Virginia.

3049           \*Mr. Weber. Southwest Virginia, okay.

3050           Is there a rating \_ I am sure there is \_ of severity of  
3051 these sites, some that have \_ are you familiar with the site,  
3052 Ms. Stoneham, in the south part of Houston, over toward Dixie  
3053 Farm, south of Hobby Airport about 10 miles? It has been a  
3054 long time since it was an issue.

3055           \*Ms. Stoneham. I am not familiar with that specific  
3056 site.

3057           \*Mr. Weber. Yes, it probably pre-dated you, but the  
3058 severity \_ okay, well, good enough. I will leave it there.

3059           Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

3060           \*Mr. Griffith. Thank you very much for yielding back,  
3061 and I now recognize Mr. Soto for his five minutes of

3062 questioning.

3063           \*Mr. Soto. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to  
3064 our witnesses. I know it has been a long day. You are  
3065 almost through it.

3066           You know, we are here talking about brownfields,  
3067 polluted lands that we see throughout all of our districts,  
3068 even in Florida, where a lot of the areas in central Florida  
3069 are very new. We see that brownfields are bad for public  
3070 health, they are bad for business, they are bad for  
3071 communities.

3072           When you look at places like downtown Kissimmee or  
3073 downtown Orlando, you will see gas stations that were around  
3074 10, 20 years ago, and now it is just sitting there,  
3075 abandoned, in the middle of downtown. These are areas that,  
3076 when they are restored, bring huge economic growth to areas.

3077           I am thrilled that, through the infrastructure law, we  
3078 saw over \$1 billion in investment in these brownfields  
3079 programs. When you look at Florida itself, in Florida's 9th  
3080 congressional district we have 45 sites in Orange County,  
3081 where Orlando is one of the most urban areas of our district,  
3082 4 in Osceola, and 31 in Polk County. A lot of old citrus  
3083 sites, and helping out with mining in that area. And then,  
3084 since 1997, we have seen in Florida over 235 contaminated  
3085 sites cleaned up in Florida, almost 90,000 jobs. So we know  
3086 that this can be helpful.

3087           So \_ which is \_ when I saw the 65 percent cut to EPA  
3088   spending, I was deeply concerned about that. Now it looks  
3089   like it won't be staff alone, it will be spending cuts. And  
3090   obviously, we want to be mindful that this isn't strategic  
3091   and it could hurt programs like the brownfield.

3092           Mayor Bollwage, how could a reduction in 65 percent  
3093   spending or a huge reduction in staff affect brownfield  
3094   projects that you are working on?

3095           \*Mr. Bollwage. Well, it happens all at once. It will  
3096   create chaos, and that seems to be what is going on at the  
3097   moment. I would not like, as a mayor of the fourth largest  
3098   city in New Jersey, to not be able to rely on EPA and EPA  
3099   funding.

3100           \*Mr. Soto. You know, a long time ago I lived in New  
3101   Jersey and worked in Jersey City, and \_

3102           \*Mr. Bollwage. Where? Oh, Jersey City?

3103           \*Mr. Soto. The Lackawanna Building in Jersey City, and  
3104   then in \_ for Prudential, and I saw the important reuse  
3105   through these brownfield programs. Like many New Jerseyans,  
3106   I am a Floridian for over half a lifetime now, and work very  
3107   closely with our ranking member, Frank Pallone, and others.  
3108   And we see this in central Florida in areas that, even though  
3109   they may be a little newer, there still are already  
3110   brownfields, and it is just leaving economic growth on the  
3111   table.

3112           Do you think this would affect the number of years it  
3113 takes to put these projects forward?

3114           \*Mr. Bollwage. Absolutely. I mean, you have heard an  
3115 awful lot of testimony from Mr. Connaughton about the  
3116 process. And if you eliminate the people who are reviewing  
3117 the process, then the mathematical equation is it takes even  
3118 that much longer.

3119           \*Mr. Soto. And then how important is consistency in  
3120 getting investment and raising bonds to help match some of  
3121 these funds?

3122           \*Mr. Bollwage. Well, being the fourth largest city,  
3123 unlike the rural and the small towns, we have the ability to  
3124 raise money through bonding issues, and that is helpful in  
3125 redeveloping a brownfield site. But if you don't have the  
3126 people to review it, and you don't have the assessments done  
3127 properly, then it takes that much longer, and the bonding  
3128 agency is going to give you a more difficult rate to borrow  
3129 that money.

3130           \*Mr. Soto. Mr. Connaughton, I did appreciate your  
3131 comments about the need to try to streamline these, so I am  
3132 trying to find \_ what is that careful balance to have an  
3133 efficient review, where it is not dragging on and on and on,  
3134 but we are not just rubber-stamping even a well-qualified  
3135 private-sector's plan without at least some review. So where  
3136 do we find that balance with something so sensitive as

3137 brownfields?

3138           \*Mr. Connaughton. Well, the great advantage of the way  
3139 we have constructed our modern environmental laws is they all  
3140 have reporting, monitoring, self-reporting of non-compliance,  
3141 auditing, inspection, and enforcement. And very different  
3142 from when I started in my career \_ and then many of you \_ we  
3143 now have a culture of compliance when it comes to the  
3144 environment.

3145           In fact \_ and so non-compliance is very rare, and  
3146 especially with respect to the kinds of big infrastructure  
3147 projects that I have been talking about, okay? They can't  
3148 afford not to comply. So my view is, can we please let them?  
3149 And they still have to do all of the \_ all the mandatory  
3150 things with the judicial review behind that and citizen  
3151 suits. So there is still risk if you screw up, we are just  
3152 putting 99 percent of our effort on the people that don't  
3153 screw up.

3154           And this goes to the resources issue you are raising. I  
3155 really want to see \_ our quite capable environmental  
3156 professionals that are in these agencies, I want them working  
3157 on the hard problems. I don't want them working on the easy  
3158 problems.

3159           \*Mr. Soto. Sure.

3160           \*Mr. Connaughton. I think we can find a really good  
3161 outcome here.

3162 But also I would just note we have 400,000 to work on,  
3163 and there is no amount of increase in the brownfields budget,  
3164 which \_ again, I want money there, but there is no amount of  
3165 increase that is going to get the rest of the 40,000. We  
3166 have only done, you know, tens of thousands in 25 years. So  
3167 I want to be sure that \_ I hope you will look bigger and say  
3168 let's go after all of them because we need them, of which EPA  
3169 is one contributing part.

3170 \*Mr. Soto. Which is why we need to keep EPA funding  
3171 steady to keep these projects going.

3172 Thanks so much, and I yield back.

3173 \*Mr. Griffith. The gentleman yields back. I am going  
3174 to take a point of personal privilege, since he mentioned  
3175 Osceola and Orlando.

3176 My constituent who lives not too far from Mr. Miller is  
3177 Mac McClung, who plays for a two-way contract with the  
3178 Orlando Magic and the Osceola Magic, and is a threepeat  
3179 winner of the dunk contest, and \_

3180 \*Mr. Soto. Mr. Chairman?

3181 \*Mr. Griffith. Both Mr. Miller and I know his family,  
3182 and we wish him well.

3183 \*Mr. Soto. If I may, I saw him jump over Shaq to dunk  
3184 last year to win the championship. We are going to claim  
3185 impartially, if that is okay with you, sir, since he \_

3186 \*Mr. Griffith. We will share, we just want to make sure

3187 the Orlando Magic pick him up full-time. And that being  
3188 said -

3189 \*Mr. Soto. I support that. We will get the petitions  
3190 going. We are doing it right here in the Energy and Commerce  
3191 Committee.

3192 \*Mr. Griffith. There you go. That being said, we have  
3193 the policy in our committee of anyone who is on the committee  
3194 being able to waive on. Mrs. Dingell considers this an  
3195 important matter, and has sat here for some time so that she  
3196 can waive on to the committee. We welcome her and now  
3197 recognize Mrs. Dingell for her five minutes of questions.

3198 \*Mrs. Dingell. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for letting me  
3199 be here and for this important hearing, EPA's brownfield  
3200 programs. And thank you to all of the witnesses. I have \_  
3201 for a long time we have worked together on things. We agree  
3202 most of the time, and it is great to be with all of the  
3203 witnesses.

3204 As we have heard today, the brownfield programs have a  
3205 long history of empowering states, local communities, and  
3206 stakeholders to work together to clean up contaminated sites,  
3207 protect public health, and restore land for productive use.  
3208 It has enjoyed strong bipartisan support in this committee,  
3209 and I am hopeful that it will continue in this Congress.

3210 In my district and across southeast Michigan, the  
3211 Downriver Community Conference operates one of the most

3212 successful programs in the country, as Jim knows. Serving 20  
3213 communities across 3 counties and over 900,000 residents, the  
3214 DCC has secured and distributed more than \$21 million in  
3215 grants for site cleanups and their assessments. It has  
3216 revitalized 200 sites, generating more than \$700 million in  
3217 investment, creating jobs and strengthening the tax base of  
3218 our downriver communities.

3219 Through the brownfield programs the DCC has made  
3220 Michigan a more vibrant, sustainable, and attractive place to  
3221 live, work, visit, and raise a family, and we need to make  
3222 sure this success continues. We must fully reauthorize and  
3223 fully fund the program. And if you think people don't care,  
3224 it continues to be an issue that brings many people that \_ to  
3225 town hall meetings every quarter that I hold that want \_ we  
3226 are a heavy industrial area, we have a lot of places that  
3227 need to be cleaned up. So the brownfield program delivers  
3228 real results, and we must ensure it remains a priority.

3229 Mayor Bollwage, a lot of people have asked you the same  
3230 questions I was going to, so I am going to ask you the same  
3231 question, but a different way.

3232 [Laughter.]

3233 \*Mrs. Dingell. If the brownfields program \_ it is set  
3234 to become insolvent in 2026. What will be the impact on your  
3235 community if these resources are allowed to lapse?

3236 \*Mr. Bollwage. So we have identified 57 brownfield

3237 properties, of which we have developed about 15 to 18  
3238 properties. Without the ability to have assessment dollars  
3239 or cleanup dollars, then our efforts to revitalize that  
3240 property would be put off for another day or years.

3241       \*Mrs. Dingell. Or may not get cleaned up.

3242       \*Mr. Bollwage. Ever.

3243       \*Mrs. Dingell. You know, when we are revitalizing a  
3244 community through brownfields programs, it is imperative that  
3245 we center said community in the planning and implementation  
3246 process, assuring that we are serving their needs first and  
3247 foremost.

3248       Ms. Stoneham, you emphasized that a key part of  
3249 redevelopment is ensuring to \_ that end product is reflective  
3250 of the priorities for your community. Can you talk about  
3251 more about how you accomplished this when you were  
3252 administering your brownfield grants in Houston?

3253       \*Ms. Stoneham. Happy to. We have a brownfields  
3254 activation committee, which is comprised of local community  
3255 leaders, policy experts, professionals, and anyone who just  
3256 cares whether you are doing air quality, soil quality, water  
3257 quality. We convene them on a quarterly basis in order to  
3258 discuss our projects and to directly listen to what they  
3259 would like to see.

3260       But we also host community visioning sessions with our  
3261 architects so we can discuss what housing solutions can be

3262 placed, whether it is a duplex, a town home, or whatever  
3263 typology that may be.

3264         We also incorporated in the Houston Land Bank policy a  
3265 neighborhood advisory council. So regardless if it is a  
3266 brownfield or not, they have a scoring portion of our  
3267 criteria so when we procure land and give it to a builder, we  
3268 actually gave them 15 out of the 50 points.

3269         \*Mrs. Dingell. Thank you. You know, what is important  
3270 \_ I am going to say this to all of you \_ is to remember that  
3271 brownfield sites usually consist of multiple hazards that  
3272 pose threats to the public health of their local communities.  
3273 They are aware of it. They are scared of it. And that is  
3274 the issue that drives a lot of this wanting to be cleaned up.  
3275 Revitalization of a brownfield does not only mean an economic  
3276 recovery, but the removal of threats that will contribute to  
3277 the protection of our people's health.

3278         Ms. Stoneham, during your testimony you mentioned that  
3279 \_ significant threats to brownfield sites present to the  
3280 communities you work with in Houston. Can you speak more to  
3281 the specific health challenges you have tackled through your  
3282 work with the Houston Land Bank?

3283         \*Ms. Stoneham. Sure, and I also want to share a saying  
3284 that I have adopted from one of my colleagues from Adapta,  
3285 which is everything is a brownfield until proven not guilty,  
3286 and we take that approach to everything that we look at when

3287 we are assessing the opportunities.

3288 Now, I am not an environmental scientist, but I will say  
3289 for our Project Yellow Cab we removed about 20 feet of soil,  
3290 some underground storage tanks. We found levels of dioxin,  
3291 and just made sure that we are very transparent also with the  
3292 findings that we found, and publicly share that on our  
3293 website so we are also educating the community about what a  
3294 brownfield is, what these contaminants are, and they can  
3295 directly talk to our consultants so they can better  
3296 understand what solutions we are proposing to move forward  
3297 with them.

3298 \*Mrs. Dingell. Thank you. I must yield back.

3299 \*Mr. Griffith. I thank the gentlelady for yielding  
3300 back.

3301 Seeing no further witnesses, I ask unanimous consent to  
3302 insert into the record the documents included in the staff  
3303 hearing documents list.

3304 Without objection, so ordered.

3305 [The information follows:]

3306

3307 \*\*\*\*\*COMMITTEE INSERT\*\*\*\*\*

3308

3309           \*Mr. Griffith. I remind members that they have 10  
3310 business days to submit questions for the record. I am  
3311 already thinking of some, and I ask the witnesses to respond  
3312 to those questions promptly.

3313           Without objection, the committee is adjourned.

3314           [Whereupon, at 12:57 p.m., the subcommittee was  
3315 adjourned.]