

**Testimony
of
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President
Utah Mining Association
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Natural Resources
“Unleashing America's Energy and Mineral Potential”
February 8, 2023**

Good morning. I would like to thank Chairman Westerman and Ranking Member Grijalva for the opportunity to appear today. Thanks, also, to Congressman Curtis for being Utah’s voice on this committee. I am Brian Somers, president of the Utah Mining Association (UMA), which was founded in 1915 and represents Utah’s hardrock, coal, and industrial mineral mine operators and related support industries. UMA also works closely with the National Mining Association and other state and regional industry groups.

UMA’s mission is to advocate on behalf of Utah’s mining industry, its workers, and the communities they support. Mining is a critical industry in Utah, contributing \$7.7 billion to the state’s GDP, supporting nearly 57,000 direct and indirect jobs¹, and powering Utah’s broader economy by producing the coal which provides 62% of Utah’s low-priced electricity². Mining jobs in Utah are family- and community-sustaining jobs with mining salaries averaging \$83,280 annually, which is 37.5% higher than the average Utah wage³.

It is important to recognize that mining is something most people never experience firsthand, yet they benefit from the products made possible by mining every single day. From smartphones, medical devices, and consumer electronics to new energy technologies and national defense systems, our modern economy and quality of life are supported by mined minerals.

Demand for minerals is expected to increase radically in coming years, yet domestically produced minerals currently meet less than half of the needs of U.S. manufacturers, creating an untenable strategic vulnerability for our economic and national security.

To put this demand in the context of the energy goals of the Biden Administration, a 2021 International Energy Agency report stated that, “...to hit net-zero globally by 2050,

¹ McCarty, T.J., Wang, Z., Kim, M., and Evans, J., 2022, The economic contribution of Utah’s energy and mining industries: Utah Geological Survey Miscellaneous Publication 176, 12 p., 4 appendices, <https://doi.org/10.34191/MP-176>

² <https://www.nei.org/resources/statistics/state-electricity-generation-fuel-shares>

³ <https://jobs.utah.gov/wi/data/library/wages/annualprofilewages.html>

would require six times more mineral inputs...than today.”⁴ A 2022 report on copper demand from S&P Global also stated, “...substitution and recycling will not be enough to meet the demands of electric vehicles (EVs), power infrastructure, and renewable generation. Unless massive new supply comes online in a timely way, the goal of Net-Zero Emissions by 2050 will be short-circuited and remain out of reach.”⁵

Our nation’s lack of a clearly defined minerals policy is undermining our ability to supply our own mineral needs and support future economic growth.

The U.S. mine permitting system is duplicative, inefficient, and unpredictable, leading to an average federal permitting timeframe of seven to 10 years. Compounded by the inevitable litigation from environmental groups, the U.S. permitting process is one of the longest in the world. Countries like Canada and Australia—which have stringent environmental safeguards like the U.S.—can get mines through permitting in two to three years.

In Utah, mines on state or private lands can be permitted in a timeframe similar to those of Canada and Australia. However, two-thirds of Utah’s land—land which contains many of our state’s substantial mineral resources—is controlled by the federal government. The current federal permitting regime obstructs domestic mining and blunts our ability to compete globally.

Lengthy delays deter investment and encourage dependence on countries like China, Russia, and the Congo which have abysmal environmental, labor, human rights, and governance records. According to the 2023 USGS Mineral Commodity Summaries^{6,7}, the U.S. is more than 50% dependent on foreign imports for a staggering 51 important mineral commodities, including 15 commodities for which we are 100% import reliant. China was the largest single source of foreign mineral imports in 2022.

This import reliance is a threat to our nation, and it is unnecessary. Of those 51 mineral commodities for which the U.S. is more that 50% import reliant, Utah has current production, historical production, or established resources for 20 of them. To give just one example, the U.S. imports 100% of the indium we use. Indium is a mineral used in nearly every product with a touchscreen. According to the Utah Geological Survey, Utah has an established indium deposit that could supply the entire U.S. consumption of indium for 14 years.⁸

Fully developing our mineral potential in Utah—just one state—could significantly diminish our country’s need for foreign imports. Imagine if we could responsibly develop

⁴ [IEA: The Role of Critical Minerals in Clean Energy Transitions](#)

⁵ [S&P Global - The Future of Copper: Will the looming supply gap short-circuit the energy transition?](#)

⁶ [USGS Mineral Commodity Summaries 2023](#)

⁷ [The U.S. Releases Signed MOU with the DRC and Zambia to Strengthen EV Battery Value Chain](#)

⁸ Mills, S.E. and Rupke, A., 2020, Critical minerals of Utah: Utah Geological Survey Circular 129, 49 p., <https://doi.org/10.34191/C-129>

all of our nation's vast mineral estate—guided by our world-class environmental and safety standards, and employing a highly-skilled and highly-paid workforce.

To encourage investment in America's mineral resources—both in mineral production and in processing—the federal government must fix its broken permitting processes, set clear timeframes, establish a lead agency to promote certainty and accountability, and enact policies that ensure access to mineral deposits.

I applaud Chairman Westerman for introducing the Securing America's Mineral Supply Chains Act and Congressman Stauber for reintroducing his Permitting for Mining Needs Act. These bills will enable our nation to responsibly develop our mineral resources, re-shore supply chains, support domestic manufacturing, and secure our economic and national security.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today and I look forward to your questions.

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