



HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
NATURAL RESOURCES
CHAIRMAN BRUCE WESTERMAN

To: House Committee on Natural Resources Republican Members
From: House Committee on Natural Resources Republican Staff
Date: Monday, March 2, 2026
Subject: Markup of 16 Bills

The House Committee on Natural Resources will hold a markup on **Thursday, March 5, 2026, at 10:00 a.m., in room 1324 Longworth House Office Building**. The bills to be considered include: H.R. 41 (Rep. Begich); H.R. 301 (Rep. Maloy); H.R. 398 (Rep. Ocasio-Cortez); H.R. 1077 (Rep. Lee of NV); H.R. 2252 (Rep. Fedorchak); H.R. 2709 (Rep. Fong); H.R. 2768 (Rep. Fleischmann); H.R. 3553 (Rep. Min); H.R. 3831 (Rep. Webster); H.R. 4684 (Rep. Kennedy of UT); H.R. 5576 (Rep. Fulcher); H.R. 5587 (Rep. Kim); H.R. 5617 (Rep. Ansari); H.R. 5631 (Rep. Hurd); H.R. 5638 (Rep. Kennedy of UT); and H.R. 5682 (Rep. Issa).

Member offices are requested to notify Madeline Kelley (Madeline.Kelley@mail.house.gov) by 4:30 p.m. on Wednesday, March 4, 2026, to confirm their Member's attendance at the markup.

I. KEY MESSAGES & TOPLINE ACTIONS

- Bills expected to move by regular order: H.R. 5576 (Rep. Fulcher), "*Enhancing Geothermal Production on Federal Lands Act*" and H.R. 5587 (Rep. Kim), "*Harnessing Energy At Thermal Sources Act*" or "*HEATS Act*".
- Please note that H.R. 5576 and H.R. 5587 will each have an amendment in the nature of a substitute (ANS). Members should ensure that amendments are drafted to the ANS.
- Bills expected to move by unanimous consent: H.R. 41 (Rep. Begich), "*Unrecognized Southeast Alaska Native Communities Recognition and Compensation Act*"; H.R. 301 (Rep. Maloy), "*Geothermal Energy Opportunity Act*" or the "*GEO Act*"; H.R. 398 (Rep. Ocasio-Cortez), "*Geothermal Cost-Recovery Authority Act of 2025*"; H.R. 1077 (Rep. Lee of NV), "*Streamlining Thermal Energy through Advanced Mechanisms Act*" or the "*STEAM Act*"; H.R. 2252 (Rep. Fedorchak), "*North Dakota Trust Lands Completion Act of 2025*"; H.R. 2709 (Rep. Fong), "*Save Our Sequoias Act*"; H.R. 2768 (Rep. Fleischmann), "*Benton MacKaye National Scenic Trail Feasibility Study Act of 2025*"; H.R. 3553 (Rep. Min), "*Building Resiliency and Understanding of Shrublands to Halt Fires Act*" or the "*BRUSH Fires Act*"; H.R. 3831 (Rep. Webster), "*Florida Safe Seas Act of 2025*"; H.R. 4684 (Rep. Kennedy of UT), "*Star-Spangled Summit Act of 2025*"; H.R. 5617 (Rep. Ansari), "*Geothermal Gold Book Development Act*"; H.R. 5631 (Rep. Hurd), "*Geothermal Ombudsman for National Deployment and*

Optimal Reviews Act”; H.R. 5638 (Rep. Kennedy of UT), “*Geothermal Royalty Reform Act*”; and H.R. 5682 (Rep. Issa), To take certain land in the State of California into trust for the benefit of the Pechanga Band of Indians, and for other purposes.

II. EXPECTED LEGISLATION

H.R. 5576 (Rep. Fulcher), “*Enhancing Geothermal Production on Federal Lands Act*”

The four stages of geothermal resource development within a lease are exploration, resource drilling, production, and reclamation. Each stage under the lease requires separate authorizations and compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) when ground-disturbing activities are proposed.¹ Before becoming operational, federal geothermal projects must complete up to six rounds of environmental review.² Each of these reviews, in turn, is subject to administrative delays and legal challenges.

H.R. 5576 would unburden geothermal energy producers from one of these reviews by exempting geothermal exploration wells (temperature-gradient wells, monitoring wells, and calibration wells) from NEPA review.³ Prior to developing a geothermal facility, operators must drill exploratory wells to characterize the resource and collect data. To be eligible for the bill’s streamlining provisions, an operator must ensure that its exploration well is under 13 3/8 inches in diameter, the surface disturbance is less than 8 acres, activities are completed in 180 days, and the site will be reclaimed within three years.

At markup, an ANS will be offered that incorporates technical assistance from the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI).

Hearing information on H.R. 5576, including testimony, may be viewed [here](#), and the hearing memo may be viewed [here](#).

Staff contacts: Rob MacGregor (Robert.MacGregor@mail.house.gov) and Jacob Greenberg (Jacob.Greenberg@mail.house.gov).

H.R. 5587 (Rep. Kim), “*Harnessing Energy At Thermal Sources Act*” or “*HEATS Act*”

Currently, geothermal operators on non-federal land producing any quantity of federal resources must abide by all federal laws and permitting processes—even though the federal minerals share of total production is minuscule. H.R. 5587 would stipulate that geothermal exploration or production wells on non-federal lands are not subject to NEPA,⁴ Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA),⁵ or Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)⁶ if (1) the

¹ Morgan Smith, “Enhanced Geothermal Systems: Introduction and Issues for Congress,” Congressional Research Service, September 29, 2022, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R47256>.

² Dr. Bryant Jones, Testimony before the House Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources, March 6, 2024 <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/II/II06/20240306/116882/HHRG-118-II06-Transcript-20240306.pdf>.

³ 42 U.S.C. 4321.

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ 16 U.S.C. 1536(a)–(d).

⁶ 54 U.S.C. 306108.

U.S. holds an ownership interest of less than 50 percent of the subsurface geothermal estate and (2) the operator receives a drilling permit from the applicable state. To avoid the degradation of historic properties, Section 106 of the NHPA would be waived only if the state in which the geothermal exploration and production activity occurs already has a state law in effect to preserve historic properties.

Geothermal energy operators pay a royalty of between 1 percent and 2.5 percent of the gross proceeds from the sale of electricity produced during the first 10 years of production.⁷ Thereafter, the royalty is between 2 and 5 percent each year.⁸ Since H.R. 5587 would not alter these royalty payments, it would not diminish the federal revenues created by geothermal production. Rather, the bill would lighten the administrative responsibilities of federal agencies, while expediting the permitting process for geothermal development.

At markup, an ANS will be offered to address technical edits.

Hearing information on H.R. 5587, including testimony, may be viewed [here](#), and the hearing memo may be viewed [here](#).

Staff contacts: Rob MacGregor (Robert.MacGregor@mail.house.gov) and Jacob Greenberg (Jacob.Greenberg@mail.house.gov).

H.R. 41 (Rep. Begich), “Unrecognized Southeast Alaska Native Communities Recognition and Compensation Act”

In 1971, the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) was enacted to settle the aboriginal land claims of Alaska Natives.⁹ Through ANCSA, Alaska Native Corporations (ANCs) were established to receive land under the settlement and disperse payments to Alaska Natives.¹⁰ The village populations estimated in the 1970 census largely determined the acreage amounts of land entitlements to village corporations.¹¹

The communities of Haines, Ketchikan, Petersburg, Tenakee, and Wrangell were not included in the list of Southeast Alaska Native villages, denying them the opportunity to form a village or urban corporation under Section 16 of ANCSA.¹² Tenakee, Haines, and Ketchikan appealed their lack of inclusion, but because Congress did not include a right of appeal for Southeast villages, their appeals were rejected outright.¹³

H.R. 41 would amend ANCSA to allow Haines, Ketchikan, Petersburg, Tenakee, and Wrangell to organize into Alaska Native urban corporations and each select one township in Southeast Alaska within the Tongass National Forest. The legislation also establishes that no land

⁷ 30 U.S.C. 1004.

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ 43 U.S.C. 1601, et seq.

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ 43 U.S.C. 1613.

¹² P.L. 92-203 § 16.

¹³ “A Study of Five Southeast Alaska Communities” Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of Alaska Anchorage, February 1994, https://iseralaska.org/static/legacy_publication_links/StudyOf5-SE-AKCommunities.pdf.

entitlements for previously established ANCs are impacted, does not affect rights-of-way held by the state of Alaska within the selected parcels, and provides the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) access to National Forest System (NFS) roads until a mutual use agreement is reached.

At markup, an ANS will be offered that changes the short title of the bill, includes provisions concerning an existing mining claim to the land proposed for conveyance to Haines, containing exclusionary language for a mining site related to conveyance to Ketchikan, containing exclusionary language related to a lighthouse in the conveyance to Petersburg, and providing several technical clarifications at the request of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and Bureau of Indian Affairs.

A hearing on an identical bill, H.R. 4748, was held in the 118th Congress. Hearing information, including testimony, may be viewed [here](#), and the hearing memo may be viewed [here](#).

Staff contact: Kirstin Liddell (Kirstin.Liddell@mail.house.gov).

H.R. 301 (Rep. Maloy), “Geothermal Energy Opportunity Act” or “GEO Act”

H.R. 301 would prevent DOI from delaying authorized projects out of fear of litigation. This troubling agency practice played out during the Biden administration, causing the downsizing of the Dixie Meadows Geothermal Project in Nevada, which BLM had initially approved in its November 2021 record of decision (ROD).¹⁴ Despite its prior approval, BLM later delayed construction on the project in response to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s listing of the Dixie Valley toad¹⁵ under the ESA.¹⁶ During the required Section 7 consultation under the ESA, the developer decided to reduce the project’s footprint to a single geothermal power plant with an estimated output of about 12 megawatts.¹⁷ The project developer was subsequently granted a new ROD to allow development on this reduced scale.¹⁸ Despite the issuance of the ROD, the Biden administration’s BLM refused to issue notices to proceed, drilling permits, and other actions because of litigation threats, eventually announcing that the agency would instead conduct a third review of the project.¹⁹

H.R. 301 would save future geothermal projects from such injustices. The bill requires DOI to process drilling permits and other authorizations within 60 days of completing all requirements

¹⁴ “Decision Record: Dixie Meadows Geothermal Utilization Project,” Bureau of Land Management, November 23, 2021, https://eplanning.blm.gov/public_projects/75996/200167265/20050613/250056796/DMGT%20Decision%20Record%20signed%2011_23_2021.pdf.

¹⁵ “Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Endangered Species Status for the Dixie Valley Toad,” U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, December 2, 2022, [https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2022/12/02/2022-26237/endangered-and-threatened-wildlife-and-plants-endangered-species-status-for-the-dixie-valley-toad#:~:text=SUMMARY:,%2C%20as%20amended%20\(Act\).](https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2022/12/02/2022-26237/endangered-and-threatened-wildlife-and-plants-endangered-species-status-for-the-dixie-valley-toad#:~:text=SUMMARY:,%2C%20as%20amended%20(Act).)

¹⁶ P.L. 93-205.

¹⁷ Jennifer Solis, “Geothermal developer shrinks plans after toad’s endangered listing,” Nevada Current, December 12, 2022, <https://nevadacurrent.com/2022/12/12/geothermal-developer-shrinks-plans-after-toads-endangered-listing/>.

¹⁸ “Decision Record: Dixie Meadows 12MW Geothermal Utilization Project,” Bureau of Land Management, November 16, 2022, https://eplanning.blm.gov/public_projects/75996/200167265/20071516/250077698/signed%2012mw%20DR_508%20%20with%20correct%20address%20appeal%20form.pdf.

¹⁹ Scott Sonner, “US to reopen review of Nevada geothermal plant near endangered toad while legal battle is on hold,” Associated Press, July 14, 2023, <https://www.newsnationnow.com/us-news/ap-us-news/ap-us-to-reopen-review-of-nevada-geothermal-plant-near-endangered-toad-while-legal-battle-is-on-hold/>.

under federal law, unless a federal court vacates the underlying lease. This would prevent DOI from unilaterally delaying the issuance of permits and authorizations when a process is complete and a court has found no legal wrongdoing.

Hearing information on H.R. 301, including testimony, may be viewed [here](#), and the hearing memo may be viewed [here](#).

Staff contacts: Rob MacGregor (Robert.MacGregor@mail.house.gov) and Jacob Greenberg (Jacob.Greenberg@mail.house.gov).

H.R. 2252 (Rep. Fedorchak), “North Dakota Trust Lands Completion Act of 2025”

In 1889, Congress passed legislation establishing the State of North Dakota and granting approximately 2.6 million acres of individual parcels to the state to generate revenue to “support common schools.”²⁰ Today, North Dakota manages approximately 706,600 acres of surface estate and 2.6 million acres of mineral estate to support its education system.²¹ As a provision of the enabling statute, if promised land parcels in townships had been sold before North Dakota became a state, the law permitted the state government to receive separate, unreserved federal lands “in lieu” of the unavailable lands.²² The law did not permit in-lieu-of selections to be located within Indian reservations. However, subsequent establishments of tribal reservations trapped more than 31,000 surface acres and 130,000 acres of mineral estate previously selected by the State of North Dakota within these boundaries.²³

H.R. 2252 seeks to remedy this limitation by allowing North Dakota to relinquish trapped state lands within tribal reservations to the federal government and select “in-lieu” federal lands elsewhere in the state. North Dakota could access and develop these lands to generate income for public purposes while the exchanged lands are held in trust for the benefit of tribes within reservation boundaries. An amendment may be offered at markup addressing technical assistance from DOI.

Hearing information, including testimony, may be viewed [here](#), and the hearing memo may be viewed [here](#).

Staff contact: Aniela Butler (Aniela@mail.house.gov) and Brandon Miller (Brandon.Miller@mail.house.gov).

²⁰ 25 U.S. Statutes at Large, c 180 p 676; “Mission, Vision & History,” North Dakota Department of Trust Lands, <https://www.land.nd.gov/mission-vision-history>.

²¹ *Id.*

²² *Id.*

²³ “Legislation would improve access to state-owned minerals,” Minot Daily News, <https://www.minotdailynews.com/news/local-news/2021/11/legislation-would-improve-access-to-state-owned-minerals/>.

H.R. 2709 (Rep. Fong), “*Save Our Sequoias Act*”

Giant Sequoias, which can live for more than 3,000 years, are among the most fire-resilient tree species on the planet.²⁴ However, decades of inadequate forest management, combined with worsening drought conditions and historic fire suppression policies, have created an environment that is killing Giant Sequoias at an alarming and unprecedented rate.²⁵ In fact, Giant Sequoias are now facing an existential threat that could push the species to extinction in the next 25 years.²⁶ The Save Our Sequoias (SOS) Act is bipartisan legislation that would provide emergency tools and resources to land managers to take immediate action to protect Giant Sequoias from wildfires, insects, and drought.

Specifically, SOS codifies existing USFS and National Park Service (NPS) regulations that the agencies use during emergencies (e.g., wildfires) so that land managers can respond proactively to this crisis, rather than waiting reactively once a fire has already started.²⁷ SOS also creates a new categorical exclusion, specific to the Giant Sequoia range, to increase the scale of management activities needed to address this crisis. In addition, SOS would also codify the Giant Sequoia Lands Coalition, enhance shared stewardship and interagency coordination, develop a Giant Sequoia Health and Resiliency Assessment to prioritize forest management projects, and create a comprehensive reforestation strategy. During the 118th Congress, this legislation was passed out of committee on a voice vote.²⁸ At markup, an ANS will be offered reflecting various minor changes and updates to the 119th Congress version of the bill.

Hearing information, including testimony, may be viewed [here](#), and the hearing memo may be viewed [here](#).

Staff contact: Aniela Butler (Aniela@mail.house.gov).

H.R. 2768 (Rep. Fleischmann), “*Benton MacKaye National Scenic Trail Feasibility Study Act of 2025*”

The Benton MacKaye Trail (BMT), named after the American forester who famously envisioned the Appalachian Trail, is a non-motorized, backcountry trail that extends more than 280 miles across Georgia, Tennessee, and North Carolina.²⁹ Beginning in northern Georgia at Springer Mountain, the BMT crosses several national forests, connects with and crosses the Appalachian Trail in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, and terminates at the eastern part of the park.³⁰ Approximately 95 percent of the BMT is on land managed by either USFS or NPS.³¹

²⁴ Shive, et al., “Ancient trees and modern wildfires: Declining resilience to wildfire in the highly fire-adapted giant sequoia,” *Forest Ecology and Management* 511, February 2022.

²⁵ Bettina Boxall, “Hundreds of towering giant sequoias killed by the Castle fire — a stunning loss,” *LA Times*, November 16, 2020, <https://www.latimes.com/environment/story/2020-11-16/sierra-nevada-giant-sequoias-killed-castle-fire>.

²⁶ “Last of the Monarchs,” Mariposa County Resource Conservation District, <https://vimeo.com/685657372/c526d9ecec1>.

²⁷ 36 CFR 220.4.

²⁸ H.R. 2989, 118th Congress, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/2989/all-actions>.

²⁹ “Benton MacKaye Trail in Georgia,” U.S. Forest Service,

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/recarea/conf/recreation/hiking/recarea/?recid=64869&actid=50>.

³⁰ Larry Anderson, “Benton MacKaye National Scenic Trail Bill Filed in Congress,” *Peculiar Work*, May 27, 2022, <https://peculiarwork.net/blog/benton-mackaye-national-scenic-trail-bill-filed-in-congress/>.

³¹ “Bill seeks National Scenic Trail status for Benton MacKaye Trail,” *Smoky Mountain News*, June 7, 2023, <https://smokymountainnews.com/outdoors/item/35768-bill-seeks-national-scenic-trail-status-for-benton-mackaye-trail>

H.R. 2768 would amend the National Trails System Act to authorize a study of the feasibility of designating the Benton MacKaye Trail as a National Scenic Trail.³² To date, 11 National Scenic Trails have been designated across the country.³³ These routes generally extend 100 miles or more, are primarily non-motorized, and offer outstanding recreation opportunities.³⁴ This legislation would not add to the federal estate, and any designation of the trail would require a separate Act of Congress. At markup, an amendment will be offered to make minor technical corrections to the bill.

Hearing information, including testimony, may be viewed [here](#), and the hearing memo may be viewed [here](#).

Staff contacts: Aniela Butler (Aniela@mail.house.gov) and Brandon Miller (Brandon.Miller@mail.house.gov).

H.R. 3831 (Rep. Webster), “Florida Safe Seas Act of 2025”

In recent years, shark populations have risen in Florida and much of the United States.³⁵ H.R. 3831 would amend Section 317 of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act to prohibit shark feeding in the Exclusive Economic Zone off the state of Florida. This legislation aligns federal law with Florida’s state regulations, which provide that “feeding fish, sharks, or other marine species while diving or snorkeling is prohibited.”³⁶ Florida developed these regulations to protect divers, surfers, and swimmers; to prevent the feeding of marine species in multiple-use areas; and to avoid training sharks to associate human activities with food.³⁷ If enacted, this legislation would enable safer recreational use of our coastal resources and provide needed relief to Florida’s commercial and recreational fishermen, who have seen an increase in shark depredation in recent years.

Hearing information, including testimony, may be viewed [here](#), and the hearing memo may be viewed [here](#).

Staff contact: Kirby Struhar (Kirby.Struhar@mail.house.gov).

³² 16 U.S.C. Ch. 27.

³³ “National Scenic Trails,” National Park Service, <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationaltrailssystem/national-scenic-trails.htm>.

³⁴ *Id.*

³⁵ Laurie Mermet, “Hooked and stolen: How rebounding shark populations are changing Florida’s fishing,” University Press, Florida Atlantic University, April 25, 2025, <https://www.upressonline.com/2025/04/hooked-and-stolen-how-rebounding-shark-populations-are-changing-floridas-fishing/>.

³⁶ “Feeding sharks and other fish,” Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission, <https://myfwc.com/fishing/saltwater/recreational/fish-feeding/>.

³⁷ *Id.*

H.R. 4684 (Rep. Kennedy of UT), “*Star-Spangled Summit Act of 2025*”

In 2000, Scoutmaster Robert Collins led his troop on a hike to Kyhv Peak, near Provo, Utah, and proudly raised an American flag at its summit.³⁸ What began as an impromptu gesture by the scouts evolved into an annual tradition. For more than two decades, this yearly climb became a cherished community event, and the flag grew into a symbol of local pride and a recognizable landmark in the Provo area.³⁹ In 2022, however, conflict arose when USFS personnel confronted Mr. Collins regarding the flag, citing agency policies that prohibit the construction or placement of any structures, including flagpoles, on NFS lands without a permit.⁴⁰ After USFS removed the flag from the site, this local patriotic tradition was halted. H.R. 4684 would resolve this impasse by requiring USFS to issue a special use permit for the placement and maintenance of a flagpole displaying the American flag at Kyhv Peak. Specifically, the bill directs USFS to issue a 10-year special use permit to Mr. Collins or a qualified individual, non-profit organization, or volunteer group based in Utah County, Utah, if Mr. Collins declines such a permit. The bill further mandates that USFS renew or reissue the permit every 10 years and prohibits the agency from charging land-use fees associated with the permit. An amendment will be offered at markup reflecting technical assistance from the Trump administration.

Hearing information, including testimony, may be viewed [here](#), and the hearing memo may be viewed [here](#).

Staff contacts: Aniela Butler (Aniela@mail.house.gov) and Brandon Miller (Brandon.Miller@mail.house.gov).

H.R. 5631 (Rep. Hurd), “*Geothermal Ombudsman for National Deployment and Optimal Reviews Act*”

Reviews for geothermal drilling permits (GDPs), utilization plans, commercial use permits, and other geothermal authorizations are managed primarily by the BLM field offices with jurisdiction over the federal land in which a given project is located. With geothermal permitting, the mechanisms that allow for collaboration between field and state offices within BLM, or between BLM and other bureaus across DOI, are limited. Instead, local field office personnel must fully process geothermal authorizations within their respective jurisdictions.⁴¹ According to industry stakeholders, field office-specific processing requirements have produced significant variations in geothermal permitting outcomes.⁴²

H.R. 5631 would improve coordination by appointing a Geothermal Ombudsman (Ombudsman) from within BLM. The Ombudsman would be responsible for liaising between field offices and the BLM Director, providing dispute resolution services between field offices and applicants,

³⁸ Jacob Nielson, “Persistent patriotism: Congress members introduce bill that would allow American flag to fly again at Kyhv Peak,” Daily Herald, July 30, 2025, <https://www.heraldextra.com/news/2025/jul/30/persistent-patriotism-congress-members-introduce-bill-that-would-allow-american-flag-to-fly-again-at-kyhv-peak/>.

³⁹ *Id.*

⁴⁰ *Id.*

⁴¹ Dr. Bryant Jones, Written Testimony before the Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources, December 12, 2023, <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/II/II06/20231212/116633/HHRG-118-II06-Wstate-JonesB-20231212.pdf>.

⁴² Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources, Majority Staff Correspondence with Geothermal Industry Stakeholders, July 21, 2025.

monitoring permit processing, developing best practices, and coordinating with the Federal Permitting Improvement Steering Council.

H.R. 5631 would also authorize the Ombudsman to assign expert personnel from any DOI bureaus or offices to assist with approvals in state and local BLM offices as part of a newly developed Geothermal Permitting Task Force (Task Force). Lastly, this legislation would allow the Ombudsman to pay retention allowances to personnel assigned to the Task Force, subject to the availability of appropriations.

At markup, an ANS will be offered, incorporating technical assistance from DOI. The ANS will provide relevant agencies within DOI the ability to approve task force assignments.

Hearing information on H.R. 5631, including testimony, may be viewed [here](#), and the hearing memo may be viewed [here](#).

Staff contacts: Rob MacGregor (Robert.MacGregor@mail.house.gov) and Jacob Greenberg (Jacob.Greenberg@mail.house.gov).

H.R. 5638 (Rep. Kennedy of UT), “*Geothermal Royalty Reform Act*”

Currently, operators producing electricity from geothermal resources on federal land pay a royalty rate of at least 1 percent but not exceeding 2.5 percent of gross proceeds from the sale of electricity produced under the lease during the first 10 years of production.⁴³ Thereafter, the royalty rate readjusts to at least 2 percent but not exceeding 5 percent of gross proceeds from electricity produced under the lease.⁴⁴

H.R. 5638 stipulates that geothermal facilities on the same geothermal lease are treated as separate facilities with respect to royalty payments. Under the current interpretation of the law, all facilities on the same lease must pay the same royalty rate, provided that one facility has met the time-in-service threshold for the higher royalty rate. This bill’s clarification would allow for geothermal facilities on the same lease to pay different royalties, based on each individual facility’s time in service.

At markup, an ANS will be offered that incorporates technical assistance from DOI.

Hearing information on H.R. 5638, including testimony, may be viewed [here](#), and the hearing memo may be viewed [here](#).

Staff contacts: Rob MacGregor (Robert.MacGregor@mail.house.gov) and Jacob Greenberg (Jacob.Greenberg@mail.house.gov).

⁴³ 30 U.S.C. 1004.

⁴⁴ *Id.*

H.R. 5682 (Rep. Issa), To take certain land in the State of California into trust for the benefit of the Pechanga Band of Indians, and for other purposes.

The Pechanga Band of Indians (Pechanga) is a federally recognized tribe located near Temecula, California.⁴⁵ Pu'éska Mountain is central to Pechanga's creation stories and spiritual life.⁴⁶ As such, the tribe purchased Pu'éska Mountain in 2012 and placed it into trust in 2015.⁴⁷ The remaining 860 acres of BLM-managed land on the mountain are interspersed with Pechanga's existing holdings. This disarray has caused management and access challenges.⁴⁸ The tribe seeks to consolidate ownership to ensure unified stewardship of its sacred lands. Accordingly, H.R. 5682 places approximately 860 acres of BLM-managed land into trust to consolidate the Pechanga's sacred sites under unified management.

The legislation stipulates the land must remain open space, used only for cultural and conservation purposes. It cannot be used for gaming.

At markup, an ANS will be offered that provides several technical clarifications at the request of the BLM and corrects the total acreage of land being placed into trust.

Hearing information, including testimony, may be viewed [here](#), and the hearing memo may be viewed [here](#).

Staff contact: Kirstin Liddell (Kirstin.Liddell@mail.house.gov).

H.R. 398 (Rep. Ocasio-Cortez), “Geothermal Cost-Recovery Authority Act of 2025”

Cost recovery authority allows federal agencies to charge fees for processing applications, permits, and other authorizations. BLM has general cost recovery authorities under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA),⁴⁹ the Mineral Leasing Act of 1920 (MLA),⁵⁰ and the Independent Offices Appropriation Act of 1952 (IOAA).⁵¹ However, BLM contends that it is unable to charge cost recovery fees for inspecting and monitoring the construction, operation, and termination of geothermal facilities (as the agency is permitted to do, under FLPMA, for wind and solar projects).⁵²

H.R. 398 would explicitly authorize DOI to charge geothermal leaseholders fees to recover costs for geothermal lease applications, GDPs, utilization plans, site licenses, facility construction permits, commercial use permits, and other approvals related to a geothermal lease, including inspection and monitoring of exploration, production, and reclamation activities. The bill also specifies that the funding must be used for geothermal-related activities. Finally, the legislation

⁴⁵ Tiller, Veronica E. Velarde. “Tiller’s Guide to Indian Country: Economic Profiles of American Indian Reservations”, 3rd ed. Pg. 321.

⁴⁶ “Proposed Land Transfer from the Bureau of Land Management to the Pechanga Band of Indians”, September 15, 2025.

⁴⁷ *Id.*

⁴⁸ *Id.*

⁴⁹ 43 U.S.C. 1734(b) and 1764(g).

⁵⁰ 30 U.S.C. 185(l).

⁵¹ 31 U.S.C. 9701.

⁵² 43 U.S.C. 1764(g).

requires BLM to submit, within five years of enactment, a report detailing how the fees impacted BLM’s geothermal program.

Hearing information on H.R. 398, including testimony, may be viewed [here](#), and the hearing memo may be viewed [here](#).

Staff contacts: Rob MacGregor (Robert.MacGregor@mail.house.gov) and Jacob Greenberg (Jacob.Greenberg@mail.house.gov).

H.R. 1077 (Rep. Lee of NV), “*Streamlining Thermal Energy through Advanced Mechanisms Act*” or “*STEAM Act*”

Enhanced geothermal systems (EGS) are man-made reservoirs in which fluid is injected into areas of the subsurface containing hot rock to reopen pre-existing fractures and create permeability.⁵³ Increased permeability allows fluid to circulate through the re-fractured rock, transporting heat to the surface for electricity generation.⁵⁴ The U.S. Department of Energy projects that EGS could provide 60 GW of electricity by 2050 (8.5 percent of U.S. generation capacity).⁵⁵ However, the duplicative leasing and permitting process for geothermal development results in timelines longer than those of many other energy projects.⁵⁶

H.R. 1077 would expedite geothermal development by amending Section 390 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005, giving BLM the authority to grant categorical exclusions for geothermal drilling in instances where (1) drilling has occurred within the last five years or (2) drilling will occur within an area for which an approved environmental document that considered drilling was completed pursuant to NEPA within the last five years. By adding geothermal energy development to Section 390, this bill would expedite the approval process for needed geothermal projects.

Hearing information on H.R. 1077, including testimony, may be viewed [here](#), and the hearing memo may be viewed [here](#).

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H.R. 3553 (Rep. Min), “*BRUSH Fires Act*”

Wildfire risks facing communities across the country have surged in recent years, driven by development in the wildland-urban interface (WUI) and inadequate management of overgrown, fire-prone landscapes. Over the past two decades, more than 129,000 homes, businesses, and

⁵³ “What is an Enhanced Geothermal System (EGS)?”, U.S. Department of Energy, Geothermal Technologies Office, https://www1.eere.energy.gov/geothermal/pdfs/egs_basics.pdf.

⁵⁴ *Id.*

⁵⁵ “GeoVision: Harnessing the Heat Beneath Our Feet,” U.S. Department of Energy, Geothermal Technologies Office, May 2019, <https://www.energy.gov/sites/default/files/2019/06/f63/GeoVision-full-report-opt.pdf>.

⁵⁶ Morgan Smit, “Enhanced Geothermal Systems: Introduction and Issues for Congress,” Congressional Research Service, September 29, 2022, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R47256>.

other structures have been destroyed in U.S. wildfires.⁵⁷ When ignited in shrubland and grassland ecosystems, wildfires can be particularly devastating to communities due to their fast-moving nature when conditions are dry, fuels have built up, and winds are strong.⁵⁸ To counter the growing threat of wildfire in shrubland ecosystems, H.R. 3553 directs USFS to carry out a targeted study on 1) the effectiveness of wildfire mitigation methods in shrubland ecosystems and 2) the severity of damage from brush-related wildland fires to communities. At markup, an amendment may be offered making minor technical corrections to the bill.

Hearing information, including testimony, may be viewed [here](#), and the hearing memo may be viewed [here](#).

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H.R. 5617 (Rep. Ansari), “Geothermal Gold Book Development Act”

DOI’s and USFS’s joint publication, “*Surface Operating Standards and Guidelines for Oil and Gas Exploration and Development*” (Gold Book), was developed to assist oil and gas operators by “providing information on the requirements for obtaining permit approval and conducting environmentally responsible oil and gas operations on federal lands and on private surface over [f]ederal minerals (split-estate).”⁵⁹ The Gold Book’s contents not only inform operators but also guide BLM staff assigned to oil and gas development on federal land.⁶⁰

BLM does not have a Gold Book for geothermal. Instead, BLM uses the oil and gas Gold Book for geothermal activities on federal lands. H.R. 5617 would direct DOI to publish a Gold Book detailing efficient and environmentally responsible geothermal leasing and permitting practices for use by BLM field offices and geothermal operators. The bill would also require DOI to review and revise the Gold Book at least once every five years.

At markup, an ANS will be offered that incorporates technical assistance from DOI. The ANS provides BLM discretion in determining whether a separate Gold Book for geothermal is necessary.

Hearing information on H.R. 5617, including testimony, may be viewed [here](#), and the hearing memo may be viewed [here](#).

Staff contacts: Rob MacGregor (Robert.MacGregor@mail.house.gov) and Jacob Greenberg (Jacob.Greenberg@mail.house.gov).

⁵⁷ Kimiko Barrett, “Wildfires destroy thousands of structures each year,” Headwaters Economics, May 2025, <https://headwaterseconomics.org/natural%20hazards/structures-destroyed-by-wildfire/>.

⁵⁸ *Id.*

⁵⁹ “The Gold Book,” Bureau of Land Management, <https://www.blm.gov/programs/energy-and-minerals/oil-and-gas/operations-and-production/the-gold-book>.

⁶⁰ *Id.*

III. CBO SCORES

None available.

IV. EFFECT ON CURRENT LAW (RAMSEYER)

[H.R. 41](#)

[H.R. 301](#)

[H.R. 398](#)

[H.R. 1077](#)

[H.R. 1687](#)

[H.R. 2709](#)

[H.R. 2768](#)

[H.R. 3831](#)

[H.R. 5576](#)

[H.R. 5587](#)

[H.R. 5638](#)