



GEOTHERMAL RISING ACTION

March 4, 2026

The Honorable Bruce Westerman
Chair
House Committee on Natural Resources
202 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-0404

The Honorable Jared Huffman
Ranking Member
House Committee on Natural Resources
2330 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-0502

RE: Geothermal Rising's Support of Geothermal Permitting Reform Bills

Geothermal Rising Action, an affiliate of Geothermal Rising, America's largest geothermal industry association representing over 100 organizations, writes in support of the following eight bills scheduled for markup before the House Committee on Natural Resources:

- H.R. 301 (Rep. Maloy) — Geothermal Energy Opportunity (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 (STEAM) Act
- H.R. 5576 (Rep. Fulcher) — Enhancing Geothermal Production on Federal Lands Act
- H.R. 5587 (Rep. Kim) — Harnessing Energy At Thermal Sources (HEATS) Act
- H.R. 5617 (Rep. Ansari) — Geothermal Gold Book Development Act
- H.R. 5631 (Rep. Hurd) — Geothermal Ombudsman for National Deployment and Optimal Reviews (GONDOR) Act
- H.R. 5638 (Rep. Kennedy of UT) — Geothermal Royalty Reform Act

Geothermal energy can provide 100 GW of clean, firm power by 2050. It operates 24/7 at over 90 percent capacity, has the smallest land footprint per megawatt-hour of any energy source, creates high-paying jobs that can be directly interchanged with oil and gas, and can co-produce critical minerals essential for national security.

However, federal permitting barriers stall full-scale deployment. 90%+ of discoverable geothermal resources are on federal lands, yet a geothermal project on federal land can face up to six separate environmental reviews spanning a decade or more. Identical review phases can take six months in one BLM field office and years in another. This inconsistency and unpredictability deters the private capital needed to scale geothermal at the pace our grid demands—particularly as data centers, artificial intelligence infrastructure, and the reshoring of advanced manufacturing drive unprecedented electricity demand.

These eight bills collectively address core permitting barriers to geothermal development on federal lands:

- **Timelines and certainty.** The GEO Act (H.R. 301) establishes a 60-day deadline for processing permit applications after environmental review is complete and ensures processing continues despite pending litigation. These changes provide the geothermal industry with the same predictability that the conventional energy industry currently enjoys.
- **Categorical exclusion parity.** The STEAM Act (H.R. 1077) extends categorical exclusions already established for oil and gas to geothermal activities in previously studied areas. Geothermal drilling is operationally similar to oil and gas drilling but with less environmental impact—there is no justification for subjecting it to stricter requirements.
- **Exploration reform.** H.R. 5576 recognizes the minimal impact of geothermal exploration activities—temporary wells on less than eight acres, restored within three years. BLM already acknowledges this minimal impact through administrative categorical exclusions; this bill provides legislative certainty for the smallest exploration activities.
- **Split-estate reform.** The HEATS Act (H.R. 5587) eliminates duplicative federal permitting in split-estate situations where the federal government owns less than half the subsurface rights. In these circumstances, states already do most of the regulating. This targeted reform reduces redundancy while explicitly protecting Tribal lands and maintaining federal royalty obligations.
- **Standardization and accountability.** The Gold Book Act (H.R. 5617) and the GONDOR Act (H.R. 5631) work together to create the playbook and provide the quarterback. The Gold Book will incorporate geothermal into existing BLM operational guidance, standardizing procedures across field offices—addressing one of the industry's greatest challenges, where identical processes produce dramatically different timelines depending on which office handles the application. The Ombudsman and Permitting Task Force will ensure these standardized procedures are implemented efficiently, facilitating coordination, dispute resolution, and directing specialized expertise toward permitting bottlenecks.



GEOTHERMAL RISING ACTION

- **Agency resources.** The Cost-Recovery Authority Act (H.R. 398) allows discretionary reimbursement of BLM's administrative costs, recycling those funds directly into geothermal permitting capacity. This pragmatic solution addresses agency resource constraints without burdening taxpayers.
- **Investment certainty.** The Royalty Reform Act (H.R. 5638) clarifies that royalties apply per facility rather than per lease area, calculated from each facility's in-service date, removing ambiguity that has deterred investment while ensuring fair revenue to taxpayers.

These bills are complementary and should advance together. The geothermal industry needs all eight bills to achieve the comprehensive reform required to unlock America's vast geothermal potential.

Geothermal Rising Action and our members are in this industry because we care deeply about the environment. In our view, these bills do not gut environmental review, they focus it where it matters while eliminating redundancy where it does not. Americans need geothermal energy not only to meet demand, but to ensure we are doing our part as stewards of the environment. We support maintaining robust environmental review for activities with potential for significant impact. Every megawatt of geothermal displaces emissions and strengthens America's grid with reliable, weather-independent baseload power.

Our adversaries are racing ahead on geothermal. The United States has better resources, technology, and expertise. We urge the Committee to advance these eight bills and send a clear signal that America is the energy superpower of the world. And beyond that, Americans need grid reliability and clean baseload power that geothermal provides.

Thank you for your continued leadership on energy and natural resources.

Sincerely,

Caity Smith, Chair
Geothermal Rising US Policy Council