

OPENING STATEMENT

Thank you, Chair Stauber. Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you to our witnesses for joining us today.

We're here today to discuss six bills: four on geothermal energy development, including my bill, the Geothermal Cost-Recovery Act of 2024, and two on oil and gas.

I must say I am encouraged by the majority's openness to geothermal development and am eager to continue working together on this important and urgent topic.

As we know – the climate crisis is here.

In 2023, across the country, Americans experienced severe and extreme cold snaps, heat waves, and wildfires from Hawaii to Louisiana.

We saw hundred-year floods from California to the East Coast. We've seen strengthening hurricanes, tropical cyclones, and tornadoes, among other ever-more frequent disasters.

Now, more than ever, it is abundantly clear that this climate crisis demands urgent action.

An essential part of that action is rapidly – and responsibly – scaling up renewable energy.

Last Congress, Democrats put billions of dollars towards clean energy development, which, over the next ten years, will create hundreds of thousands of new green jobs.

Geothermal energy is a critical part of that mix.

Since the 1960s, geothermal energy has been used as a sustainable and reliable source of electricity. But even though it has grown significantly since then, it still only makes up less than half of one percent of our energy generation mix.

Fortunately, new breakthroughs in technology are massively expanding where geothermal energy can be developed.

The Department of Energy estimates that because of these breakthroughs, geothermal energy could grow to 60 gigawatts of capacity by 2050 – or around 9 percent of our electricity generation nationwide.

This is particularly exciting because of some of the unique benefits of geothermal energy for the clean energy transition.

Geothermal provides consistent baseload power, which is available 24/7 with minimal emissions. This complements the mix of solar, wind, and storage to build a clean grid and is crucial for maintaining stability in our energy systems, replacing dirty energy like coal.

And many of the skills needed for geothermal development are directly transferable from industries like oil and gas.

As geothermal technologies advance, we'll be able to site these power plants at places like retired coal plants, where fossil fuel workers can find jobs.

Better yet, many of these fossil trades are already organized and unionized. Everyone from the pipefitters, to the workers in power plant control rooms, to the steamfitters, and operating engineers can find work in geothermal.

Geothermal shows a truly exciting promise to help union workers transition to a clean energy economy.

As all this growth occurs, the federal government will also have an important role to play.

The Department of Energy is supporting pilot projects and advancements in technology, and within this Committee's

jurisdiction, the Department of the Interior is often in charge of permitting.

In fact, geothermal energy was the first renewable energy project sited on U.S. public lands back in 1978, and right now, nearly 70 percent of geothermal energy capacity is on federally managed Bureau of Land Management Lands.

With the technological advancements we're seeing now, the Bureau of Land Management needs to be ready to scale up the deployment of this clean energy while remaining diligent about permitting responsibly, considering public input, and respecting Indigenous knowledge and tribal consultation.

We've heard from geothermal developers that there can be challenges when it comes to permitting new geothermal plants.

Much of that stems from capacity constraints – the need for more expertise or more staff in the right locations.

My bill, the Geothermal Cost-Recovery Act of 2024 – will allow B-L-M the flexibility to charge companies cost-recovery for things like inspections and monitoring and it will enable BLM to hire third-party experts to help review permit applications.

This flexibility will improve permitting capacity and timelines, without sacrificing any of the important steps for environmental review and community input.

Overall, I am excited for the hearing today, and look forward to hearing from today's witnesses about how we can advance renewable, union-friendly, geothermal energy on federal land.