



RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD

submitted by:

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**Committee on Natural Resources
Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources
Legislative Hearing
1334 Longworth House Office Building
February 24, 2026
10:30 AM**

- **H.R. 1501 (Rep. Shreve)**, “Protect Domestic Mining Act of 2025”
- **H.R. 2969 (Rep. Wittman)**, “Finding Opportunities for Resource Exploration Act” or the “Finding ORE Act”
- **H.R. 4781 (Rep. Barr)**, “Rare Earth Solutions and Carbon Utilization Enhancement Act of 2025” or the “RESCUE Act of 2025”
- **H.R. 5929 (Rep. Barr)**, “Critical Minerals Supply Chain Resiliency Act”
- **H.R. 7126 (Rep. Wittman)**, “Securing Essential and Critical U.S. Resources and Elements Minerals Act of 2026” or the “SECURE Minerals Act of 2026”
- **H.R. 7458 (Rep. Hageman)**, “Domestic Opportunities for Resource Exploration Act” or the “Domestic ORE Act”

Question from Rep. Fulcher:

- 1. How does maintaining the status of mining projects under the FAST Act allow more efficiency in establishing mines?**

The American Exploration & Mining Association (AEMA) very much appreciated the opportunity to testify on February 24, 2026, before the House Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources and is pleased to respond to Representative Fulcher’s question.

A mantra that is often repeated for many sectors of our economy, including mining, is the need for certainty. I believe it is the uncertainty created by policies and debates over the past several decades that has caused mining investment to flee this country. To attract that investment, companies need to know what the rules are, that they can have the security of tenure needed to explore for and develop mining deposits, and that they can get through the permitting process in a reasonable timeframe. The predictability, transparency and certainty of the FAST-41 process encourages more mines to move through the process.

AEMA members have had extensive first-hand experience with the federal permitting process, and they are significantly impacted by permitting decisions from an array of federal agencies.

Thus, our members are key stakeholders when it comes to developing a more efficient, timely and effective federal permitting process.

Congress and the administration have been very clear that they want to see all types of mineral projects move more efficiently through the Federal permitting process so that they can be developed to meet our essential economic, energy, and national security needs.

According to the U.S Geological Survey's Mineral Commodity Summaries 2026, our country's import dependence for key mineral commodities has skyrocketed over the past three decades, with the United States now 100 percent import reliant for 16 mineral commodities and greater than 50 percent import reliant for another 38 commodities. That import reliance exists even though we have significant mineral deposits of many of these commodities within our borders.

This mineral dependency comes with serious consequences. Most recently, the COVID-19 pandemic, the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and Chinese dominance of minerals markets have laid bare the vulnerabilities that exist in critical U.S. supply chains, including our reliance on imported minerals.

AEMA members experience the challenges associated with the federal permitting process every day. They also live and play in the communities where they work. Mining in America is the most environmentally responsible mining industry in the world. Miner safety and workers' rights are the top priority. Our members take great pride in responsibly producing the minerals and metals America needs.

FAST-41 was enacted to improve the timeliness, predictability, transparency, and accountability of the Federal environmental review and authorization processes for covered infrastructure projects. It is important to note that the streamlining of the mine-permitting process does not equate to reducing environmental protections. In fact, FAST-41 coverage does not predetermine or affect the outcome of any Federal decision-making process with respect to a covered project, nor modify any required environmental review or public or tribal consultation process.

Beyond mining, current FAST-41 sectors include renewable and conventional energy production, electricity transmission, surface transportation, aviation, ports and waterways, water resource projects, broadband, pipelines, and manufacturing. It is important to remember that mining stands at the front of the supply chain for these and nearly every sector of our economy.

The Permitting Council's 2020 vote to include mining as a covered sector clearly recognized that mining projects almost always involve the complex permitting processes that FAST-41 was designed to facilitate. It is great that the Permitting Council voted to include mining in FAST-41 and followed that vote with a rule. However, that decision can easily be rescinded by a subsequent rule, as we saw with a proposal from the prior administration to limit mining's eligibility for FAST-41.

Enacting H.R. 1501 and codifying mining as a covered sector under FAST-41 will send a positive signal to the investment community that the United States is serious about increasing domestic mineral production. FAST-41 provides a pathway to reduce permitting inefficiencies while retaining our world-class environmental protections, and it must be available to the entire mineral mining sector.