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The Honorable Pete Stauber, Chairman
The Honorable Yassamin Ansari, Ranking Member
House Committee on Natural Resources
Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources
U.S. House of Representatives
1333 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Hearing Record Submission – “Powering the 21st Century with American Copper”

Dear Chairman Stauber, Ranking Member Ansari, and Members of the Subcommittee:

Southern Company appreciates the opportunity to submit this letter for the record of the Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources’ oversight hearing titled *“Powering the 21st Century with American Copper.”* As one of the nation’s largest electric utility companies, Southern Company has a direct and growing interest in ensuring the United States has access to sufficient, reliable, and affordable supplies of copper to support electrification, grid reliability, and long-term economic competitiveness.

Copper is a foundational input across the electric power value chain. It is essential to transmission and distribution infrastructure and is embedded in many critical components necessary to operate, maintain, and expand the electric grid, including wires and cables, conductors, transformers, breakers and switchgear, batteries, and electronic equipment. As electricity demand increases and utilities undertake significant investments to support economic growth, new technologies, and system resilience, copper availability has become an increasingly strategic concern for our industry.

Impacts of a Looming Copper Shortfall

Southern Company is beginning to observe early indicators of stress in copper-dependent supply chains, particularly in markets for transformers and other critical grid equipment.

In the near term, copper price inflation and volatility are driving significant cost increases for materials essential to grid infrastructure. Copper prices have risen sharply since early 2025 and widely used pricing indices are substantially higher year over year. Because many utility contracts are indexed to copper prices, these increases are rapidly flowing through to equipment costs, compounding affordability challenges at a time when utilities are investing heavily to meet rising demand while protecting customers from excessive rate impacts.

At the same time, tightened global supply conditions are contributing to extended lead times and heightened procurement risk. Tariffs on imported copper announced in 2025 prompted short-term import

surges followed by reduced foreign supply to the U.S. market, as some global producers redirected material elsewhere. Even prior to these developments, the electric utility industry was experiencing unprecedented backlogs for large power transformers, with domestic lead times extending multiple years and prices increasing dramatically since 2019. If copper availability becomes a binding constraint, these challenges are likely to intensify, forcing utilities to order equipment further in advance and adjust infrastructure project timelines.

Over the longer term, a sustained copper shortfall threatens to prolong elevated prices and increase capital requirements for grid modernization projects well into the 2030s. Without actions to address supply constraints, copper risks becoming a bottleneck that slows critical investments needed to maintain reliability, integrate new technologies, and support economic growth, rather than an enabler of progress.

Policy Considerations

To mitigate these risks and strengthen the resilience of the domestic copper supply chain, Southern Company encourages policymakers to consider:

- Supporting policies that enable increased domestic copper production and processing while ensuring rigorous environmental and community protection.
- Improving permitting efficiency for critical mineral projects to reduce uncertainty and long development timelines that discourage investment.
- Evaluating the cumulative impacts of tariffs and trade policies on downstream infrastructure industries that rely on affordable access to copper.
- Encouraging recycling, recovery, and circular-economy approaches that can supplement primary supply over time.
- Recognizing copper's role in national security, grid reliability, and affordability when developing federal energy, infrastructure, and critical minerals policy.

Conclusion

Copper is indispensable to the nation's ability to build and maintain a reliable electric grid, meet growing energy demand, and remain globally competitive in an increasingly electrified and technology-driven economy. Southern Company appreciates the Subcommittee's leadership in highlighting the emerging supply-demand imbalance and looks forward to continued engagement on policies that promote a resilient, affordable, and secure copper supply for the United States.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input for the hearing record.

Respectfully submitted,



Southern Company