



April 22, 2026

The Honorable Bruce Westerman
Chairman
House Committee on Natural Resources
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jared Huffman
Ranking Member
House Committee on Natural Resources
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Westerman and Ranking Member Huffman,

On behalf of the **National Electrical Contractors Association (NECA)**, I write to thank you for convening the hearing, *“Powering the 21st Century with American Copper,”* and for your leadership in advancing policies to strengthen domestic supply chains for critical materials. Copper is essential to the United States’ ability to build and maintain critical infrastructure, deploy advanced technologies and security systems, meet rising energy demand, and compete in the global race for artificial intelligence (AI).

NECA represents 4,500 union electrical contractors that employ hundreds of thousands of electrical workers. Our members build and maintain the systems that power the American economy, from grid and transportation networks to industrial facilities and rapidly growing data center campuses. The electrical construction industry uses enormous quantities of copper each year, embedded in nearly every facet of our work: power distribution, wiring systems, conduits, transformers, EV charging infrastructure, and grid modernization projects. NECA contractors are therefore on the front lines of the copper supply chain and directly experience the consequences of price volatility, shortages, and regulatory uncertainty.

The expansion of hyperscale and AI-driven data centers is now one of the most significant drivers of copper demand for NECA members. A conventional data center typically uses thousands of tons of copper, while a large hyperscale AI data center campus can require tens of thousands of tons per facility for power distribution, grounding, and cooling systems. These facilities are among the most copper-dense projects NECA contractors build, and they are multiplying across the country as AI workloads grow.



NECA members are already delivering marquee projects that illustrate how central copper is to our work. One NECA contractor is building a multi-building, 400-megawatt AI data center campus in the Southeast for a major cloud provider. That project alone requires tens of thousands of tons of copper for medium- and low-voltage distribution, switchgear, busway, and redundant power feeds, with procurement and pricing risks stretching over several years of phased construction.

On the West Coast, a NECA contractor is leading the electrical scope for a major hyperscale data center cluster that ties directly into regional transmission upgrades and on-site renewable generation. There, copper is not only embedded in the data halls and backup systems, but also in new substation equipment, underground transmission, and large-scale EV charging infrastructure required for the construction workforce. In both cases, material price swings and supply disruptions force contractors to re-sequence work, renegotiate schedules, and in many instances absorb unanticipated copper cost increases under fixed-price contracts.

The Committee's focus on the S&P Global report, "Copper in the Age of AI: The Challenges of Electrification," is timely and important. Public analysis based on that work and similar studies shows global copper demand rising sharply over the next decade, with a significant supply shortfall emerging if new production, processing, and recycling capacity are not brought online. Recent market behavior underscores these concerns, as copper prices have moved toward record territory while demand intensifies and supplies tighten.

For electrical contractors, this volatility translates directly into higher project costs and increased uncertainty. NECA members often work under fixed-price or long-term contracts that provide limited flexibility to adjust for rapid copper price spikes or unexpected tariffs. When prices increase after a bid has been accepted, contractors are frequently forced to absorb those increases, which can erode already thin margins and strain the financial health of small and medium-sized firms. On complex projects like hyperscale data centers, even modest percentage changes in copper prices can translate into seven- or eight-figure cost swings.



Copper supply chain disruptions and cost surges have cascading impacts across the construction and infrastructure ecosystem. NECA contractors face extended lead times, unanticipated change orders, and the need to redesign electrical systems to cope with material constraints, all of which can delay project delivery. In critical infrastructure and data center projects, these delays can postpone energizing facilities that support grid reliability, national defense, financial markets, cloud services, and AI-driven tools, creating broader economic and security risks.

Labor dynamics amplify these challenges. Demand for electricians is growing far faster than the overall labor market, and contractors must carefully coordinate scarce skilled workers with uncertain material deliveries. When copper is unreliable or unaffordable, crews may be idled, project timelines extended, and customers face higher costs or postponed investments in the energy and digital infrastructure on which households and businesses depend.

A stable, resilient domestic copper supply chain would deliver significant benefits to the electrical construction industry and the broader economy. Increased and more predictable domestic production, processing, and recycling would help reduce price volatility, shorten lead times, and improve planning certainty for multi-year projects that NECA contractors execute. A more secure supply would also support national security by reducing reliance on foreign sources of critical minerals and strengthening the resilience of defense, grid, and data infrastructure.

By anchoring copper production and processing in the United States, policymakers can better align supply with the nation's electrification, grid modernization, and AI deployment goals. Reliable access to copper helps ensure that public and private investments in clean energy, transmission, EV charging, and digital infrastructure translate into timely, on-budget projects that create American jobs and enhance competitiveness.

NECA applauds the Committee's work on the SPEED Act and the Mining Regulatory Clarity Act, which are important steps toward improving permitting efficiency and regulatory certainty for domestic mining projects. By streamlining duplicative reviews and clarifying



federal authorities, these measures help reduce the time and risk associated with bringing new copper projects online while maintaining strong environmental protections.

We view this hearing, together with these legislative efforts, as a strong signal that Congress recognizes copper's central role in powering the 21st-century American economy. NECA stands ready to work with the Committee to ensure that the benefits of these reforms reach the contractors and workers who ultimately deploy copper into critical infrastructure across the country.

Building on the SPEED Act and Mining Regulatory Clarity Act, NECA recommends a comprehensive federal strategy to strengthen the copper supply chain:

- Modernize permitting with clear timelines and coordinated reviews for copper mining, processing, and associated infrastructure, coupled with robust environmental standards and meaningful community engagement.
- Expand domestic processing and refining capacity to reduce reliance on foreign intermediates and ensure mined copper can quickly reach domestic manufacturers and construction projects.
- Scale copper recycling and secondary recovery from end-of-life equipment and buildings to supplement primary production, lower environmental impacts, and improve supply resilience.
- Invest in workforce development across mining, processing, and electrical construction so that, as copper projects come online, sufficient skilled workers are available to deliver them.
- Enhance federal data and transparency on copper supply, demand, and bottlenecks so that contractors, developers, and policymakers can anticipate shortages and respond proactively.
- Integrate critical mineral considerations into major infrastructure, defense, and energy planning to ensure that copper and other materials do not become hidden bottlenecks to strategic projects.



These steps, combined with the Committee's ongoing oversight, will help ensure that American copper production and processing keep pace with the extraordinary demands of electrification and the AI revolution. For NECA contractors, such a framework would mitigate cost shocks, reduce delays, and allow them to deliver essential projects more efficiently and affordably for taxpayers and private customers alike.

Thank you again for your leadership on this issue and for the opportunity to provide NECA's perspective for the hearing record. We appreciate the Committee's focus on copper's importance to national and economic security and look forward to working with you to develop a durable, resilient, and affordable copper supply chain that will power American innovation and prosperity in the decades ahead.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Marco A. Giamberardino'.

Marco A. Giamberardino, MPA
Senior Vice President
Government and Public Affairs