



April 29, 2026

The Honorable Bruce Westerman
Chairman
Committee on Natural Resources
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Jared Huffman
Ranking Member
Committee on Natural Resources
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Westerman and Ranking Member Huffman:

On behalf of the National Mining Association (NMA), I thank the committee for holding today's hearing titled, Powering the 21st Century with American Copper. The importance of domestically produced copper to our nation's energy, infrastructure, manufacturing, and national security priorities cannot be overstated.

The NMA is the only national trade organization that serves as the voice of the U.S. mining industry and the hundreds of thousands of American workers it employs before Congress, the federal agencies, the judiciary, and the media, advocating for public policies that will help America fully and responsibly utilize its vast natural resources. We work to ensure America has secure and reliable supply chains, abundant and affordable energy, and American-sourced materials – all delivered under world-leading environmental, safety, and labor standards.

At a time when energy and mineral demand is soaring, we need federal policies that strengthen domestically produced supply chains of copper and other minerals and materials to ensure the mining industry has the clarity and regulatory certainty to make generational investments and compete globally. Unfortunately, through duplicative regulations and prolonged permitting processes that fail to improve environmental outcomes, we have created self-imposed barriers that have pushed investment and production overseas.

Copper is an indispensable part of U.S. energy security, advanced manufacturing, and economic resilience, not only as a raw material but as the backbone of power generation, transmission, and next-generation technologies. According to S&P Global, copper is the "metal of

electrification”¹ and they noted in a recent report that “global copper demand is projected to rise 50% by 2040.”²

To put this into perspective, a single large data center can require more than 2,000 tons of copper to build. Despite its critical and growing importance, the U.S. reliance on foreign sources in 2025 grew to 57 percent, a significant increase from the previous year.³

Our alarming overreliance on mineral imports is a self-imposed crisis. The U.S. has vast reserves of copper and other mineral resources, with world-class resources across the U.S. Unfortunately, it takes an average of 29 years to bring a mine online in the U.S.⁴ A recent S&P Global report indicated that specifically for a copper mine, the average is 17 years.⁵ Both these timelines are far too long for U.S. economic and national security to wait. Our inability to efficiently permit mines and build secure supply chains from our domestic resources is a clear strategic vulnerability.

There can be no mineral supply chain security without full and fundamental acknowledgment that we need to expand new domestic mining and processing opportunities and implement policies to make this possible. The Biden and Trump Administrations have correctly identified the importance of copper and the need to increase domestic production. President Biden added copper to the Department of Energy’s critical materials list⁶ and President Trump added it to the U.S. Geological Survey’s critical minerals list.⁷ Congress must pass comprehensive permitting reform that will attract investment, ensure access to mineralized federal lands, and bring together the mineral supply chain workforce of the future.

This can be accomplished by reducing delays and duplication caused by National Environmental Policy Act analyses; increasing transparency in the permitting process; enacting durable judicial reforms; providing access to mineralized federal lands without the constant threat of withdrawals; allowing mining companies to use adjacent lands for ancillary purposes; preventing weaponization of the Endangered Species Act; expanding tax credit eligibility by updating 45X; supporting mine workforce training and

¹ IHS Markit., The Future of Copper Will the looming supply gap short-circuit the energy transition? https://cdn.ihsmarkit.com/www/pdf/0722/The-Future-of-Copper-Full-Report_14July2022.pdf, July 2022.

² S&P Global – Copper in the Age of AI: Challenges of Electrification, <https://www.spglobal.com/en/research-insights/special-reports/copper-in-the-age-of-ai>

³ USGS Mineral Commodity Summaries 2026, P. 11. <https://pubs.usgs.gov/periodicals/mcs2026/mcs2026.pdf>

⁴ S&P Global – Mine Development Times: The US in Perspective, https://cdn.ihsmarkit.com/www/pdf/0724/SPGlobal_NMA_DevelopmentTimesUSinPerspective_June_2024.pdf

⁵ S&P Global – Copper in the Age of AI Report

⁶ 2023 DOE Critical Material List, <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2023/08/04/2023-16611/notice-of-final-determination-on-2023-doe-critical-materials-list>

⁷ 2025 DOI Critical Mineral List, <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/11/07/2025-19813/final-2025-list-of-critical-minerals>

education programs; and bolstering investment in domestic refining capacity as well as research and development capabilities. These changes would not only benefit project proponents, but also federal, state and local governments as well. Fortunately, this committee has already advanced many of these provisions through passage of the Standardizing Permitting and Expediting Economic Development (SPEED) Act (H.R. 4776), the Mining Regulatory Clarity Act (H.R. 1366), and the ESA Amendments Act of 2025 (H.R. 1897). I urge the committee to also pass the Mining Schools Act of 2025 (H.R. 2457).

Copper is a key driver in our nation's ability to advance economic and national security priorities. Failure to produce enough copper will hamper many of these key policy objectives, including achieving AI leadership, supporting rapid data center expansion, delivering energy dominance, and reshoring advanced manufacturing.

The path to achieving a strong mineral supply chain that supports U.S. economic and national security is within our grasp, but we must be willing to take the first step together. The mining industry looks forward to working with this committee and this congress in a bipartisan way to find solutions that secure mineral supply chains for generations to come.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rich Nolan', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Rich Nolan

