

**Statement for the Record
U.S. Department of the Interior**

**House Natural Resources Committee
Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources
Legislative Hearing**

**H.R. 9640, Earth MRI Reauthorization Act of 2026; and
H.R. 9646, Quantum-Enhanced Critical Minerals Mapping Act of 2026**

July 21, 2026

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this Statement for the Record regarding H.R. 9640, Earth MRI Reauthorization Act of 2026 and H.R. 9646, Quantum-Enhanced Critical Minerals Mapping Act of 2026

H.R. 9640, Earth MRI Reauthorization Act of 2026

H.R. 9640 would reauthorize the United States Geological Survey (USGS) Mineral Resources Program's Earth Mapping Resource Initiative, or Earth MRI, through 2031. The bill also specifies that mapping provided by Earth MRI may include data derived from modern sensing technologies to improve the characterization critical mineral, geothermal, natural hydrogen, and other subsurface resource systems. In addition, H.R. 9640 would require the integration of data from the 3D Hydrography Program of the USGS into Earth MRI data.

The USGS launched Earth MRI in 2019 in response to President Trump's issuance of Executive Order 13817, *A Federal Strategy to Ensure Secure and Reliable Supplies of Critical Minerals*, which called for modernizing geological, geophysical, and topographic mapping in areas with potential deposits of critical mineral resources. The USGS conceived Earth MRI as a partnership with state geological surveys, other Federal agencies, and the private sector. This partnering led directly to the first national map of areas with critical mineral potential, which helps USGS prioritize new data collection efforts needed to quantify mineral resource potential, and provides land managers, industry, and other stakeholders with a shared understanding of the potential distribution of critical mineral resources.

Through partnerships with state geological surveys, other Federal agencies, and the private sector, Earth MRI has covered by nearly 30 percent of the nation with magnetic and radiometric geophysical surveys at a resolution suited to characterizing mineral resource potential. Earth MRI has collected other essential geoscience data, is accelerating the Nation's mineral economy, and has had broader applications in resources, hazards, and infrastructure. Earth MRI is also incorporating innovative geophysical techniques and tools and, as the List of Critical Minerals has expanded, is evaluating additional areas of the country for ore deposit research and discovery. However, much of the country still lacks the geological data necessary to locate and quantify critical mineral resources at large.

Recognizing that mineral development is a national security priority, the Department of the Interior (Department) is committed to ensuring the United States is the leading producer and processor of critical minerals, including rare earth elements, in order to create jobs and prosperity at home, strengthen domestic supply chains, and reduce the global influence of adversarial states. The Department supports H.R. 9640 and the reauthorization of Earth MRI, which would further the Administration's priorities of unleashing American energy and minerals.

H.R. 9646, Quantum-Enhanced Critical Minerals Mapping Act of 2026

H.R. 9646 would require the Secretary of the Interior (Secretary), acting through the USGS, to conduct original quantum-enhanced geophysical surveys to improve upon existing USGS data for the discovery and characterization of critical mineral and rare earth element deposits on or adjacent to Federal lands. Specifically, the bill would direct the Secretary to conduct mobile quantum gravity gradiometry surveys over at least three priority critical minerals focus areas identified under Earth MRI, with priority given to focus areas in the western rare earth element zones, among other requirements. H.R. 9646 would also require the Secretary to submit a report to Congress no later than 24 months after enactment. The report to Congress on the program would include several components, including an analysis of private sector interest in survey data and recommended legislative or regulatory changes to advance critical mineral permitting in identified areas.

The USGS is committed to working with industry, universities, Federal research organizations, and other partners to advance innovation in geophysical surveys, and looks forward to further collaboration with the Subcommittee and the Sponsor on promoting and accelerating the development of relevant technologies.