



HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
NATURAL RESOURCES
CHAIRMAN BRUCE WESTERMAN

To: Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources Republican Members
From: Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources Staff: Rob MacGregor
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Date: Friday, December 12, 2025
Subject: Legislative Hearing on 9 Bills

The Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources will hold a legislative hearing on H.R. 301 (Rep. Maloy), “*Geothermal Energy Opportunity Act*” or “*GEO Act*”; H.R. 398 (Rep. Ocasio-Cortez), “*Geothermal Cost-Recovery Authority Act of 2025*”; H.R. 1077 (Rep. Lee of NV), “*Streamlining Thermal Energy through Advanced Mechanisms Act*” or “*STEAM Act*”; H.R. 1687 (Rep. Fulcher), “*Committing Leases for Energy Access Now Act*” or “*CLEAN Act*”; H.R. 5576 (Rep. Fulcher), “*Enhancing Geothermal Production on Federal Lands Act*”; H.R. 5587 (Rep. Kim), “*Harnessing Energy At Thermal Sources Act*” or “*HEATS Act*”; H.R. 5617 (Rep. Ansari), “*Geothermal Gold Book Development Act*”; H.R. 5631 (Rep. Hurd), “*Geothermal Ombudsman for National Deployment and Optimal Reviews Act*”; and H.R. 5638 (Rep. Kennedy of UT), “*Geothermal Royalty Reform Act*”.

The hearing will take place on **Tuesday, December 16, 2025, at 10:15 a.m. in room 1334, Longworth House Office Building.**

Member offices are requested to notify Kenna Cline (Kenna.Cline@mail.house.gov) by 4:30 p.m. on Monday, December 15, 2025, if their Member intends to participate in the hearing.

I. KEY MESSAGES

- Geothermal energy is abundant on federal lands and developing geothermal resources is crucial to meeting America’s growing energy demand.
- Geothermal energy has high growth potential due to developing technologies like enhanced geothermal systems (EGS). However, cumbersome federal leasing and permitting processes pose significant challenges to greater geothermal deployment.
- Removing unnecessary red tape will allow developers to better leverage rapidly evolving technologies to harness greater amounts of geothermal energy.

II. WITNESSES

Panel I (Members of Congress)

- *To Be Announced*

Panel II (Administration Witness)

- **Mr. Jon Raby**, Nevada State Director, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Department of the Interior, Reno, NV [*All Bills*]

Panel III (Outside Experts)

- **Mr. Tim Latimer**, Co-Founder and CEO, Fervo Energy, Houston, TX [*H.R. 301, H.R. 1077, H.R. 5587 and H.R. 5631*]
- **Mr. Paul Thomsen**, Vice President of Business Development, Ormat Technologies, Inc., Reno, NV [*H.R. 301, H.R. 5638*]
- **Dr. Bryant Jones**, Executive Director, Geothermal Rising, Boise, ID [*All Bills*]
- **Dr. Kerry Rohrmeier**, Nevada Climate and Energy Strategy Director, The Nature Conservancy, Reno, NV [*All Bills*] [*Minority Witness*]

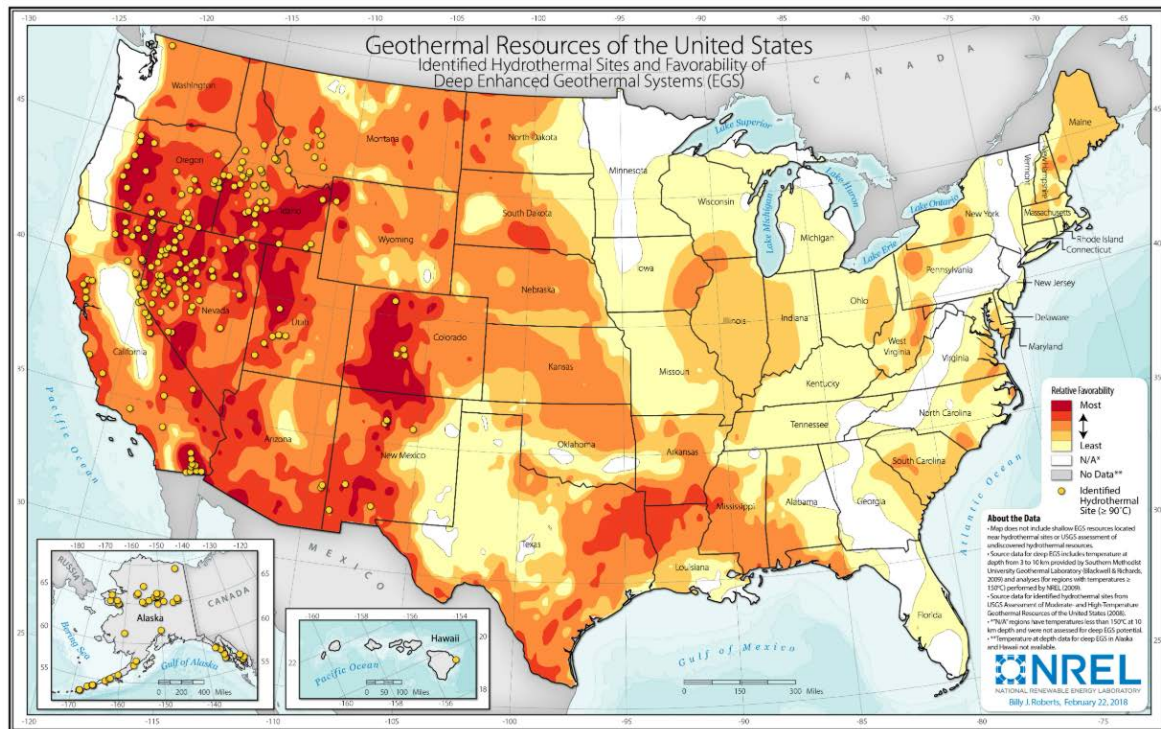
III. BACKGROUND

Overview of Geothermal Energy

Geothermal power is a baseload renewable energy resource derived by capturing heat from an underground water reservoir or from naturally occurring steam under high pressure.¹ Geothermal energy can be used for both electricity generation and heating applications. It is abundant in the western U.S., where the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has authority over geothermal leasing on approximately 245 million acres of public lands, including 104 million acres of U.S. Forest Service (USFS) lands.²

¹ Morgan Smith, “Enhanced Geothermal Systems: Introduction and Issues for Congress,” Congressional Research Service, September 29, 2022, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R47256>.

² Bureau of Land Management, “Geothermal Energy,” <https://www.blm.gov/programs/energy-and-minerals/renewable-energy/geothermal-energy>.



Source: National Renewable Energy Laboratory, 2018.³

In 2023, geothermal power plants across seven states produced about 17 billion kilowatt hours (kWh) of electricity, equal to 0.4 percent of total U.S. utility-scale electricity generation.⁴ Most of the nation's geothermal power plants are found in western states, including Hawaii, where geothermal energy resources are closer to the earth's surface. California generates more electricity from geothermal power than any other state, while Nevada has the highest proportion of its electricity generation attributed to geothermal power.⁵

Geothermal Energy on Federal Lands

Geothermal was the first renewable energy technology that BLM approved for production on public lands, with the first project approved in 1978.⁶ Today, 51 operating power plants produce geothermal energy from BLM-managed lands, with a combined installed capacity of more than 2.6 gigawatts (GW).⁷

³ National Renewable Energy Laboratory, "Geothermal Resource Data, Tools, and Maps," 2018, <https://www.nrel.gov/gis/geothermal>.

⁴ Energy Information Administration, "Geothermal explained," April 3, 2024, <https://www.eia.gov/energyexplained/geothermal/use-of-geothermal-energy.php>.

⁵ Energy Information Administration, "Geothermal explained," February 15, 2022, <https://www.eia.gov/energyexplained/geothermal/where-geothermal-energy-is-found.php>.

⁶ Bureau of Land Management, "Geothermal Energy," <https://www.blm.gov/programs/energy-and-minerals/renewable-energy/geothermal-energy>.

⁷ *Id.*

The United States Geological Survey (USGS) operates several programs that support research and development of geothermal energy resources. The Geothermal Steam Act of 1970 (GSA)⁸ directs USGS to conduct national-scale assessments of geothermal resources, the most recent of which was published in 2008.⁹ Additionally, through the Earth Mapping Resources Initiative, the agency coordinates priorities with the Department of Energy (DOE) Geothermal Technologies Office to collect useful data for both critical mineral and geothermal resources.¹⁰

As conventional and next-generation geothermal technologies seek to reduce development costs and help meet skyrocketing domestic energy demand, reforming cumbersome leasing and permitting processes on federal lands is essential. Interest in federal lands for geothermal energy production has grown significantly in recent years. In October 2025, BLM held a lease sale in Nevada that generated a record \$9.4 million in bids for 86 parcels of land.¹¹ BLM held further 2025 lease sales in Utah, Oregon, Idaho, and California, highlighting the important role that federal lands can play in bolstering geothermal potential.¹²

H.R. 301 (Rep. Maloy), “Geothermal Energy Opportunity Act” or “GEO Act”

H.R. 301 would prevent the Department of the Interior (DOI) from delaying authorized projects out of fear of litigation. This troubling agency practice recently delayed and downsized the Dixie Meadows Geothermal Project in Nevada, which BLM had initially approved in its November 2021 record of decision (ROD).¹³ Despite its prior approval, BLM later delayed construction on the project in response to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s listing of the Dixie Valley toad¹⁴ under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).¹⁵ During the required Section 7 consultation under the ESA, the developer decided to reduce the project’s footprint to a single geothermal power plant with an estimated output of about 12 megawatts.¹⁶ The project developer was subsequently granted a new ROD to allow development on this reduced scale.¹⁷ Despite the issuance of the ROD, the Biden administration’s BLM refused to issue notices to proceed, drilling permits, and

⁸ Pub. L. No. 91-581.

⁹ U.S. Geological Survey, “Geothermal Resource Investigations Project,” January 26, 2022, <https://www.usgs.gov/centers/gmeg/science/geothermal-resource-investigations-project>.

¹⁰ U.S. Geological Survey, “Implementation of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Initial Spend Plan,” https://d9-wret.s3.us-west-2.amazonaws.com/assets/palladium/production/s3fs-public/media/files/USGS%20BIL%20Spend%20Plan_FINAL.pdf.

¹¹ Carlo Cariaga, “BLM Nevada geothermal lease sale nets over USD 9 million in bids on 86 parcels,” Think GeoEnergy, October 23, 2025, <https://www.thinkgeoenergy.com/blm-nevada-geothermal-lease-sale-nets-over-usd-9-million-in-bids-on-86-parcels/>.

¹² *Id.*

¹³ Bureau of Land Management, “Decision Record: Dixie Meadows Geothermal Utilization Project,” November 23, 2021, https://eplanning.blm.gov/public_projects/75996/200167265/20050613/250056796/DMGT%20Decision%20Record%20signed%2011_23_2021.pdf.

¹⁴ U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, “Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Endangered Species Status for the Dixie Valley Toad,” December 2, 2022, [https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2022/12/02/2022-26237/endangered-and-threatened-wildlife-and-plants-endangered-species-status-for-the-dixie-valley-toad#:~:text=SUMMARY:,%2C%20as%20amended%20\(Act\)](https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2022/12/02/2022-26237/endangered-and-threatened-wildlife-and-plants-endangered-species-status-for-the-dixie-valley-toad#:~:text=SUMMARY:,%2C%20as%20amended%20(Act).).

¹⁵ Pub. L. No. 93-205.

¹⁶ Jennifer Solis, “Geothermal developer shrinks plans after toad’s endangered listing,” Nevada Current, December 12, 2022, <https://nevadacurrent.com/2022/12/12/geothermal-developer-shrinks-plans-after-toads-endangered-listing/>.

¹⁷ Bureau of Land Management, “Decision Record: Dixie Meadows 12MW Geothermal Utilization Project,” November 16, 2022, https://eplanning.blm.gov/public_projects/75996/200167265/20071516/250077698/signed%2012mw%20DR_508%20%20with%20correct%20address%20appeal%20form.pdf.

other actions because of litigation threats, eventually announcing that the agency would instead conduct a third review of the project.¹⁸

H.R. 301 would spare future geothermal projects from such injustices. Specifically, the bill requires DOI to process drilling permits and other authorizations within 60 days, unless a federal court vacates the underlying lease. This would prevent DOI from unilaterally delaying the issuance of permits and authorizations when a court has found no legal wrongdoing.

H.R. 398 (Rep. Ocasio-Cortez), “Geothermal Cost-Recovery Authority Act of 2025”

Cost recovery authority allows federal agencies to charge fees for processing applications and other documents. This authority is provided in the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA),¹⁹ the Mineral Leasing Act of 1920 (MLA),²⁰ and the Independent Offices Appropriation Act of 1952 (IOAA).²¹ Additionally, Section 3021(b) of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2015²² directs BLM to collect a fee for processing oil and gas applications for permit to drill (APDs) from Fiscal Year (FY) 2016 through FY 2026. From FY 2006 through FY 2015, however, fees for APDs and geothermal drilling permits (GDPs) were suspended by Section 365 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005 (EPA05).²³

In 2005, BLM published a cost recovery rule²⁴ to update and create new fees and service charges for processing documents related to its mineral programs. Because the rule was finalized after EPA05’s passage, it did not include a fee for GDPs or geothermal exploration permits, although it did include fees for other geothermal activities. In 2022, BLM updated and created new geothermal fees²⁵ but still did not include a fee for GDPs. In a 2022 renewable energy report,²⁶ BLM argued that it is unable to charge cost recovery fees for inspecting and monitoring the construction, operation, and termination of geothermal facilities (as the agency is permitted to do under FLPMA for wind and solar projects).²⁷

H.R. 398 would explicitly authorize the DOI to charge geothermal leaseholders fees to recover costs for geothermal lease applications, GDPs, utilization plans, site licenses, facility construction permits, commercial use permits, and other approvals related to a geothermal lease, including inspection and monitoring of exploration activities, drilling and plugging of wells, as well as the construction, operation, and reclamation of well sites. The bill specifies that the funding must be used for geothermal-related activities, including processing geothermal leases, preparing operations plans, drafting GDPs, obtaining other necessary permits, and inspecting and

¹⁸ Scott Sonner, “US to reopen review of Nevada geothermal plant near endangered toad while legal battle is on hold,” Associated Press, July 14, 2023, <https://www.newsnationnow.com/us-news/ap-us-news/ap-us-to-reopen-review-of-nevada-geothermal-plant-near-endangered-toad-while-legal-battle-is-on-hold/>.

¹⁹ 43 U.S.C. 1734(b) and 1764(g).

²⁰ 30 U.S.C. 185(l).

²¹ 31 U.S.C. 9701.

²² 30 U.S.C. 191(d).

²³ Pub. L. No. 109–58.

²⁴ 70 FR 58854.

²⁵ 87 FR 57637.

²⁶ Bureau of Land Management, “Public Land Renewable Energy – Fiscal Year 2021: Report to Congress,” March 2022, https://www.blm.gov/sites/default/files/docs/2022-04/BLM%20Public%20Land%20Renewable%20Energy%20FY21%20Report%20to%20Congress%20v4%20508_0.pdf.

²⁷ 43 U.S.C. 1764(g).

monitoring geothermal facilities. The bill would also require BLM to submit, within 5 years of enactment, a report detailing how the fees impacted BLM's geothermal program.

H.R. 1077 (Rep. Lee of NV), “Streamlining Thermal Energy through Advanced Mechanisms Act” or “STEAM Act”

Enhanced geothermal systems (EGS) are man-made reservoirs in which fluid is injected into areas of the subsurface containing hot rock to reopen pre-existing fractures and create permeability.²⁸ Increased permeability allows fluid to circulate through the re-fractured rock, transporting heat to the surface for electricity generation.²⁹ DOE projects that EGS could provide 60 GW of electricity by 2050 (8.5 percent of U.S. generation capacity).³⁰ However, the duplicative leasing and permitting process for geothermal development results in timelines longer than those of many other energy projects.³¹

H.R. 1077 would expedite geothermal development by amending EPCA to allow for a new categorical exclusion (CE) under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA)³² for geothermal energy. Section 390 of EPCA grants five different CEs for oil and gas activities.³³ These CEs expedite the development of oil and gas projects where a well has previously been drilled on certain land, or where a field has been developed and an approved land use plan, or any environmental document prepared pursuant to NEPA requirements, found that drilling is a reasonably foreseeable activity.³⁴

The bill would allow BLM to grant a CE for geothermal drilling in instances where (1) drilling has occurred within the last five years or (2) drilling will occur within an area for which an approved environmental document that considered drilling was completed pursuant to NEPA within the last five years. By adding geothermal energy development to Section 390, this bill would expedite the approval process for needed geothermal projects.

H.R. 1687 (Rep. Fulcher), “Committing Leases for Energy Access Now Act” or “CLEAN Act”

The GSA requires DOI to hold “a competitive lease sale at least once every [two] years for land in a [s]tate that has nominations pending.”³⁵ BLM, however, has often ignored this requirement. In California, for example, BLM failed to hold a competitive geothermal lease sale for nearly 11 years until the Trump administration held one in the summer of 2025.³⁶

²⁸ U.S. Department of Energy, Geothermal Technologies Office, “What is an Enhanced Geothermal System (EGS)?”, https://www1.eere.energy.gov/geothermal/pdfs/egs_basics.pdf.

²⁹ *Id.*

³⁰ U.S. Department of Energy, Geothermal Technologies Office, “GeoVision: Harnessing the Heat Beneath Our Feet,” May 2019, <https://www.energy.gov/sites/default/files/2019/06/f63/GeoVision-full-report-opt.pdf>.

³¹ Morgan Smit, “Enhanced Geothermal Systems: Introduction and Issues for Congress,” Congressional Research Service, September 29, 2022, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R47256>.

³² Pub. L. No. 91-190.

³³ *Id.*

³⁴ *Id.*

³⁵ Pub. L. No. 91-581.

³⁶ Bureau of Land Management, “California Geothermal Energy,” <https://www.blm.gov/programs/energy-and-minerals/renewable-energy/geothermal-energy/regional-information/california>

H.R. 1687 would relieve geothermal leasing and permitting backlogs by amending the GSA³⁷ to require the Secretary of the Interior (Secretary) to hold annual lease sales for geothermal energy. If a lease sale is missed for any reason, the bill would require the Secretary to hold replacement sales during the same year. The bill would also require the Secretary to respond to geothermal drilling permit applications within 30 days of receipt, informing applicants whether their applications are complete. If the Secretary determines an application is complete, then the Secretary would have an additional 30 days to issue a final decision on the application. The GSA currently lacks such permitting timelines, creating inefficiencies in the geothermal permitting process.

H.R. 5576 (Rep. Fulcher), “Enhancing Geothermal Production on Federal Lands Act”

The four stages of geothermal resource development within a lease are exploration, resource drilling, production, and reclamation. Each stage under the lease requires separate authorizations and NEPA compliance when ground-disturbing activities are proposed.³⁸ Before becoming operational, federal geothermal projects must complete up to six rounds of environmental review.³⁹ Each of these reviews, in turn, is subject to administrative delays and legal challenges.

H.R. 5576 would unburden geothermal energy producers from one of these NEPA reviews by exempting geothermal exploration wells (temperature gradient wells, monitoring wells, and calibration wells).⁴⁰ Prior to developing a geothermal facility, operators must drill exploratory wells to characterize the resource and collect data. To be eligible for the bill’s streamlining provisions, an operator must ensure that its exploration well is under 13 3/8 inches in diameter, the surface disturbance is less than 8 acres, activities are completed in 180 days, and the site will be reclaimed within three years. The bill would also exclude geotechnical investigations and road construction and maintenance (within existing rights-of-way) from NEPA.

Additionally, the bill would direct DOI to designate geothermal leasing priority areas on federal lands that are economically viable for geothermal energy production when such activity is not prohibited under a land use plan. DOI would be required to reevaluate the covered lands every ten years and prepare a supplemental environmental impact statement for the geothermal leasing priority areas.

H.R. 5587 (Rep. Kim), “Harnessing Energy At Thermal Sources Act” or “HEATS Act”

H.R. 5587 would expedite the development of geothermal energy on non-federal lands where federal minerals are already developed. Currently, geothermal operators on non-federal land producing any quantity of federal resources must abide by all federal laws and permitting processes—even if the federal minerals component of overall production is minuscule. H.R. 5587 would relieve this burden by clarifying that geothermal exploration or production wells on

³⁷ Pub. L. No. 91-581.

³⁸ Morgan Smith, “Enhanced Geothermal Systems: Introduction and Issues for Congress,” Congressional Research Service, September 29, 2022, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R47256>.

³⁹ Dr. Bryant Jones, Testimony before the House Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources, March 6, 2024 <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/II/II06/20240306/116882/HHRG-118-II06-Transcript-20240306.pdf>.

⁴⁰ 42 U.S.C. 4321.

non-federal lands are not subject to NEPA,⁴¹ Section 7 of ESA,⁴² or Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)⁴³ if (1) the U.S. holds an ownership interest of less than 50 percent of the subsurface geothermal estate and (2) the operator receives a drilling permit from the applicable state. To avoid the degradation of historic properties, Section 106 of the NHPA would be waived only if the state in which the geothermal exploration and production activity occurs already has a state law in effect to preserve historic properties.

Geothermal energy operators pay a royalty of between 1 percent and 2.5 percent of the gross proceeds from the sale of electricity produced during the first ten years of production.⁴⁴ Thereafter, the royalty is between 2 and 5 percent each year.⁴⁵ Since H.R. 5587 would not alter these royalty payments, it would not diminish the federal revenues created by geothermal production. Rather, the bill would lighten the administrative responsibilities of federal agencies, while expediting the permitting process for geothermal development.

H.R. 5617 (Rep. Ansari), “Geothermal Gold Book Development Act”

DOI’s and USFS’s joint publication, “*Surface Operating Standards and Guidelines for Oil and Gas Exploration and Development*” (Gold Book), was developed to assist oil and gas operators by “providing information on the requirements for obtaining permit approval and conducting environmentally responsible oil and gas operations on federal lands and on private surface over [f]ederal minerals (split-estate).”⁴⁶ The Gold Book’s contents not only inform operators but also guide BLM staff assigned to oil and gas development on federal land.⁴⁷ Although this publication was last revised in 2007, it remains a useful supplement to other federal guidance that has been released or is planned to be released.

Despite the significant growth in geothermal operations on federal land, the BLM has yet to publish a similar book of practices for geothermal energy production. Accordingly, H.R. 5617 would direct DOI to publish a Gold Book detailing efficient and environmentally responsible geothermal leasing and permitting practices for use by BLM field offices and geothermal operators. The bill would also require DOI to review and revise the Gold Book at least once every five years. With a geothermal Gold Book, BLM staff will have improved guidance for reviewing and approving geothermal lease sales, permitting applications, and drilling and production operations.

⁴¹ 42 U.S.C. 4321.

⁴² 16 U.S.C. 1536(a)–(d).

⁴³ 54 U.S.C. 306108.

⁴⁴ 30 USC 1004.

⁴⁵ *Id.*

⁴⁶ Bureau of Land Management, “The Gold Book,” <https://www.blm.gov/programs/energy-and-minerals/oil-and-gas/operations-and-production/the-gold-book>.

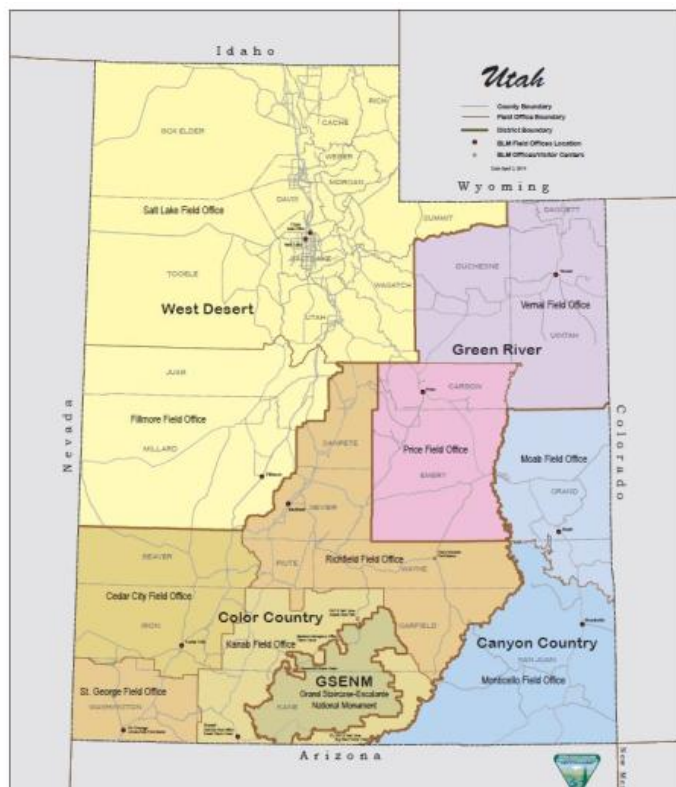
⁴⁷ *Id.*

H.R. 5631 (Rep. Hurd), “Geothermal Ombudsman for National Deployment and Optimal Reviews Act”

Reviews for GDPs, utilization plans, commercial use permits, and other geothermal authorizations are managed primarily by the BLM field offices with jurisdiction over the federal land in which a given project is located. For example, in Utah, geothermal permitting responsibilities are divided among 11 BLM field offices.⁴⁸

With geothermal permitting, the mechanisms that allow for collaboration between field and state offices within BLM, or between BLM and other bureaus across DOI, are limited. Instead, local field office personnel must fully process geothermal authorizations within their respective jurisdictions.⁴⁹

According to industry stakeholders, field office-specific processing requirements have produced significant variations in geothermal permitting outcomes.⁵⁰ For example, developers have noted that as geothermal energy expands into new regions, some BLM field offices lack experience with key technical aspects of project development, resulting in significant delays across a range of permits and approvals.⁵¹ Additionally, field offices in remote jurisdictions often face greater challenges recruiting and retaining staff with requisite geothermal permitting expertise than do field offices in more populated regions.⁵²



Source: BLM, Field Office Boundaries

H.R. 5631 would improve coordination by appointing a Geothermal Ombudsman (Ombudsman) from within BLM. The Ombudsman would be responsible for liaising between field offices and the BLM Director, providing dispute resolution services between field offices and applicants, monitoring permit processing, developing best practices, and coordinating with the Federal Permitting Improvement Steering Council (FPISC).

⁴⁸ Bureau of Land Management, “Field Office Boundaries,” April 6, 2017, <https://www.blm.gov/documents/utah/public-room/map/field-office-boundaries>.

⁴⁹ Dr. Bryant Jones, Written Testimony before the Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources, December 12, 2023, <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/II/II06/20231212/116633/HHRG-118-II06-Wstate-JonesB-20231212.pdf>.

⁵⁰ Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources, Majority Staff Correspondence with Geothermal Industry Stakeholders, July 21, 2025.

⁵¹ *Id.*

⁵² *Id.*

H.R. 5631 would also authorize the Ombudsman to assign expert personnel from any DOI bureaus or offices to assist with approvals in state and local BLM offices as part of a newly developed Geothermal Permitting Task Force (Task Force). Lastly, this legislation would allow the Ombudsman to pay retention allowances to personnel assigned to the Task Force, subject to the availability of appropriations.

H.R. 5631 provides a commonsense framework to improve national coordination on geothermal approvals, standardize best practices, reduce permitting timelines, and build key institutional expertise across BLM field offices.

H.R. 5638 (Rep. Kennedy of UT), “Geothermal Royalty Reform Act”

Currently, operators producing electricity from geothermal resources on federal land pay a royalty rate of at least 1 percent but not exceeding 2.5 percent of gross proceeds from the sale of electricity produced under the lease during the first 10 years of production.⁵³ Thereafter, the royalty rate increases to at least 2 percent but not exceeding 5 percent of gross proceeds from electricity produced under the lease.⁵⁴

H.R. 5638 stipulates that geothermal facilities on the same geothermal lease are treated as separate facilities with respect to royalty payments. Under the current interpretation of the law, all facilities on the same lease must pay the same royalty rate, provided that one facility has met the time-in-service threshold for the higher royalty rate. This bill’s clarification would allow for geothermal facilities on the same lease to pay different royalties, based on each individual facility’s time in service.

IV. MAJOR PROVISIONS & ANALYSIS

H.R. 301 (Rep. Maloy), “Geothermal Energy Opportunity Act” or “GEO Act”

Section 2. Effect of Pending Civil Actions on Processing Applications Related to Geothermal Leasing.

- Requires DOI to continue processing geothermal drilling permits and other authorizations within 60 days unless a federal court vacates the underlying lease.

H.R. 398 (Rep. Ocasio-Cortez), “Geothermal Cost-Recovery Authority Act of 2025”

Section 2. Cost Recovery from Geothermal Leasing, Permitting, and Inspections.

- Provides DOI with explicit authority to charge fees to geothermal leaseholders to offset costs for geothermal applications, licenses, permits, approvals, inspections, and monitoring.
- Specifies that the funding must be used for geothermal-related activities, including processing geothermal leases, operations plans, GDPs, other necessary permits, and inspection and monitoring of geothermal facilities.

⁵³ Legal Information Institute, 30 U.S. Code § 1004 - rents and royalties, <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/30/1004>.

⁵⁴ *Id.*

H.R. 1077 (Rep. Lee of NV), “Streamlining Thermal Energy through Advanced Mechanisms Act” or “STEAM Act”

Section 2. NEPA Review.

- Amends Section 390 of the EPCA by adding geothermal exploration and development to the CEs authorized by that section.

H.R. 1687 (Rep. Fulcher), “Committing Leases for Energy Access Now Act” or “CLEAN Act”

Section 2. Geothermal Leasing.

- Amends the GSA to require the Secretary to hold annual lease sales for geothermal energy, rather than once every other year.
- Imposes deadlines on the Secretary to respond to geothermal drilling permit applications to let applicants know whether their applications are complete.
- Requires the Secretary to issue a final decision on the application within 30 days after determining it is complete.

H.R. 5576 (Rep. Fulcher), “Enhancing Geothermal Production on Federal Lands Act”

Section 2. Geothermal Production on Federal Lands.

- Exempts geothermal exploration wells and geotechnical investigations from NEPA so long as the well is under 13 3/8 inches in diameter, disturbance is under 8 acres, activity is completed in 180 days, and the site is reclaimed within three years.

Section 3. Geothermal Leasing Priority Areas.

- Directs DOI to designate geothermal leasing priority areas on federal lands that are economically viable for geothermal energy production.

H.R. 5587 (Rep. Kim), “Harnessing Energy At Thermal Sources Act” or “HEATS Act”

Section 2. No Federal Permit Required for Geothermal Activities on Certain Land.

- Stipulates that geothermal wells on non-federal lands are not subject to NEPA, ESA, or NHPA if the U.S. holds an ownership interest of less than 50 percent of the geothermal estate and the operator receives a drilling permit from the respective state.

H.R. 5617 (Rep. Ansari), “Geothermal Gold Book Development Act”

Section 2. Publication of “Gold Book” for Geothermal Operations on Federal Lands.

- Directs DOI to identify and publish standard procedures and guidelines in a Gold Book for efficient and environmentally responsible geothermal leasing and permitting for use by BLM field offices and geothermal operators.
- Requires DOI to review and revise the Gold Book at least once every five years.

H.R. 5631 (Rep. Hurd), “Geothermal Ombudsman for National Deployment and Optimal Reviews Act”

Section 2. Geothermal Ombudsman and Permitting Task Force.

- Appoints an Ombudsman from within BLM, responsible for liaising between field offices and the BLM Director, providing dispute resolution services between field offices and applicants, monitoring permit processing, developing best practices, and coordinating with FPISC.
- Establishes a Task Force from within BLM, headed by the Ombudsman.
- Authorizes the Ombudsman to assign personnel from any DOI bureaus and offices to the Task Force to assist with the completion of geothermal authorizations in BLM field, district, or state offices.
- Stipulates that personnel may be assigned to the Task Force only if the Ombudsman determines that such assignment will not materially delay completion of authorizations within the office where the employee is located.
- Authorizes the Ombudsman to pay retention allowances of up to 25 percent to employees assigned to the Task Force.
- Requires the Ombudsman to submit an annual report to Congress that describes the activities of the Task Force and evaluates the effectiveness of geothermal permit processing during the preceding 1-year period.

H.R. 5638 (Rep. Kennedy of UT), “Geothermal Royalty Reform Act”

Section 2. Geothermal Royalties

- Stipulates that geothermal facilities on the same geothermal lease are treated as separate facilities with respect to royalty payments.

V. COST

The Congressional Budget Office has not scored any of these bills.

VI. ADMINISTRATION POSITION

The Trump administration’s position on these bills is unknown at this time.

VII. EFFECT ON CURRENT LAW (RAMSEYER)

H.R. 301

H.R. 5576

H.R. 398

H.R. 5587

H.R. 1077

H.R. 5638

H.R. 1687