

Leading the World in Resources, Trailing the Competition in Access

U.S. MINE PERMITTING DELAYS

Minerals and metals provide key components to consumer and industrial technologies, and play a critical role in America's national security through their use in the development and manufacture of military equipment.



With six in 10 voters supporting a reduction of the permitting process to two to three years², this issue is clear: mining permits in the U.S. simply take too long to secure. Action must be taken to secure timely access to our domestic resources.

While the U.S. is rich in mineral resources, permit delays and regulatory uncertainty hamper investment in our domestic resources, increasing our reliance on foreign imports.

- The U.S. government's process for securing the necessary mine permits now takes close to 10 years – one of the longest permitting processes in the world for mining projects. By comparison, permitting processes in Australia and Canada, which have similar environmental standards and practices as the U.S., take between two and three years.
- Permitting delays have been called the most significant risk to mining projects in the United States.¹
- Despite being home to reserves estimated at \$6.2 trillion, cumbersome permitting processes contribute to the U.S. importing nearly \$7 billion in minerals from foreign countries each year. We remain import-dependent for 19 key minerals resources and more than 50 percent import-dependent for an additional 24 mineral commodities used in everyday manufacturing and defense applications.
- A key national security issue, the U.S. Department of Defense uses 750,000 tons of minerals each year in technologies and equipment that protect our troops.

Consistent with recommendations made by the National Academies of Sciences, Council on Environmental Quality and the President's Job Council, legislation to address permitting delays and America's minerals needs should:

- Consider mines that provide minerals essential for our economic and defense needs as "infrastructure projects," reducing the review and permitting timeframes.
- Facilitate a timely permitting process for mineral exploration and mine development projects by clearly defining the responsibilities of a lead agency to include the establishment of binding timeframes, coordination with other agencies, and reliance on existing data and reviews.
- Limit the total review process to 30 months, unless signatories to the permitting timeline agree to an extension.
- Address the bureaucratic delays associated with agency review of National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) notices by delegating the activity to state offices and limiting reviews to 30 days.
- Require challenges to permitting decisions to be filed within 60 days.

¹ Behre Dolbear, the international consulting firm that advises mining companies globally.

² Morning Consult Polling for National Mining Association, N=2,001 registered voters, August 4-5, 2016