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**U.S. House of Representatives**  
**Committee on Natural Resources**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

**Opening Statement of**  
**Chairman Doug Lamborn**  
**Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources**  
**On Wednesday, July 23, 2014**

**1334 Longworth House Office Building Subcommittee Oversight Hearing on**  
***"American Metals and Mineral Security: An examination of the domestic critical minerals supply and demand chain"***

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As we start today's hearing, I want to make a few comments on a bill that was considered on the House floor last night.

The debate over rare earth mineral security is a clear distinction of - in essence - the two approaches to resolving problems in America.

There is one whose solution to resource security is creating a giant government program, throwing hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars at mythical "solutions", and complaining that America isn't a leader. The other approach sees resource security, and says, "where are the resources in the United States and why aren't we producing them here."

We should be very clear; America's dependence on foreign nations for minerals is a choice. Our solution to our dependence isn't a lack of resource; it is a lack of courage and commitment to produce the resources here. It is a policy of the Obama Administration that is bent on destroying jobs in the mining industry, from vetoing approved coal mines in Appalachia, to pre-emptively vetoing mines which haven't even been proposed in Alaska.

If we are legitimately concerned about rare earth minerals, we should be asking why will it take a decade to approve a mine on one of the world's largest resources in Wyoming? Why are Obama Administration Forest Service Employees actively lobbying communities in opposition to the rare earth mine? As the EPA strips the ability of Alaska to mine an entire region the size of some states, why should we believe that the EPA will be more willing to approve a rare earth mine in another region of Alaska?

Again, our foreign dependence is a choice, and the freedom from that dependence is a choice as well.

We are here today to discuss the need for a robust and strong domestic critical minerals supply and demand chain that will ensure job and economic growth, strengthen our economic and national security decrease our foreign dependence on mineral materials.

In 2010 and 2011, steps taken by China to restrict exports of mineral commodities, namely rare-earth elements, highlighted the need for the United States to assess the state of the

Nation's mineral policies and examine opportunities to produce these and other strategic and critical minerals domestically.

The disruption in the supply of rare earths minerals and the associated price spikes for these commodities highlighted the need for the United States and other countries to look for new supplies of these critical minerals and metals.

Also, companies and governments started looking at the recycling of rare-earths from end of life products, substitution with other materials, and reduction in the amount of material needed for specific applications to ensure a continued supply moving forward.

The United States is among the world's largest producer of many important metals and minerals, particularly copper, gold, lead, molybdenum, silver, and zinc; and we still have substantial domestic reserves of these metals including rare-earth elements.

Rare-earth elements are important components for renewable energy technologies, telecommunications, medical devices and maybe most importantly military technology.

They are used to make very small and powerful magnets, like these magnets that are used in the military drones that have played an important role in the war on terrorism.

Unfortunately domestic mineral exploration stagnated or declined during most of the 1990's and 2000's even though global mineral exploration trends were strongly positive.

One of the biggest road blocks to increased domestic mineral exploration and development is the very cumbersome permitting process in the United States that averages 7 to 10 years or more before mine construction can even begin.

To address the permitting issue, the House passed H.R. 761, the "*National Strategic and Critical Minerals Production Act of 2013*," on September 18, 2013. The legislation requires better coordination between agencies working on approving permits and addresses the incentive to litigate and the 'sue and settle' practice of various agencies.

We're still waiting for the Senate to take action ... from past experience it's going to be a long wait.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today.

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