

we became lawmakers. Most of the time, we hear about exotic elements at the bottom of the periodic table like neodymium and europium, but the fact is that we are facing down potentially devastating supply disruptions for a much more familiar material, lead.

In my district, we know a lot about lead because my district produces more lead than any other district in the Nation. We rely on lead for everything from bullets, missiles, ships and tanks, to batteries for vehicles and energy storage, to TV and computer screens, to storing nuclear waste. Almost every one of us drives a car powered by a lead-acid battery.

It may be hard to believe that lead could be a strategic vulnerability for the United States because we have used it in so many products for over a century. Over the past generation, we have taken lead out of things like gasoline and paint to help protect human health.

But the fact is lead is still crucial as a critical material that we use safely in a vast number of American-manufactured technologies. There is only one primary lead producer remaining in the United States today, and that facility is scheduled to close at the end of 2013. And environmental regulations are making it more and more difficult for lead producers to extract and process economically.

Today, China produces three times the lead that the United States produces, and our global market share is shrinking. At the same time, global demand for lead is expected to grow by 5 to 6 percent a year, increasing prices and competition for our domestic resources.

American innovators are working hard to improve the efficiency of lead production and make sure as many lead-acid batteries as possible are recycled so their contents can be repurposed. But the U.S. simply cannot meet its national security needs and commercialize important new technologies without a more robust, secure supply.

I hope that H.R. 761 will open doors for lead production in the United States, and that any future legislative efforts on critical minerals will also account for lead supplies.

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

This legislation is fundamentally a solution in search of a problem. Now, according to analysis of data provided by the Bureau of Land Management for hardrock mines on public lands, for which there is complete data, the average time it takes to approve a plan of operation for a mine has actually decreased under the Obama administration. We do not need a relaxation of regulations in order to speed things up.

According to the BLM data, plans of operation for hardrock mines are being approved roughly 17 percent more quickly under the Obama administration than under the previous administration. Thank you, President Obama.

And despite the majority's claims, 82 percent of plans of operation for hardrock mines are approved within 3 years under the Obama administration.

Now, the mining company will say, oh, 3 years, that's so long. Well, according to the BLM "it takes, on average, 4 years to approve a mining plan of operation for a large mine, more than 1,000 acres on public lands."

Now, my colleagues on the other side have asked repeatedly what the problem is with their legislation that would truncate and eviscerate proper review of all mines on public lands if the majority of plans are approved within 3 years.

Well, it's because a little more than 15 percent of hardrock mines take more than 4 years to approve. For these mines, where mining companies may not have submitted a complete application, or may not have posted sufficient bond to ensure that the mine is cleaned up after the work, or where additional environmental review is required because the mine is large or potentially damaging to our environment and to public health, this bill would prevent proper review.

We're already approving hardrock mines more quickly under the current administration than under the previous administration. We should not be eviscerating proper review of virtually all mining operations on public lands, including sand and gravel, I repeat, as this Republican bill would do. We should certainly not be doing it under the pretense of developing critical and strategic minerals.

Now, the other side likes to cherry-pick. They cherry-pick one statistic out of a report, without having, apparently, read the rest of the report.

If you look at the full report by the international consulting firm Behre Dolbear, it states that "permitting delays are a global issue" and that "the business environment will likely favor firms that aggressively take a proactive stance concerning societal and environmental issues."

Plans under the current administration, under the current BLM, plans of operation for hardrock mines are being approved roughly 17 percent more quickly than previously.

They say that the United States is last, ranked last, in mining. No. What they fail to note is this very report says that the United States is one of the most attractive countries in the world for mining, sixth, to be precise, sixth most attractive. We are number six in the world when you take all factors into consideration and all countries into consideration.

Yet my colleagues on the other side of the aisle continue to cherry-pick and say that the United States is so unfair to the mining interests that we have to give them a break, that we have to give away all of these mining resources on the public's lands, with no royalties and very few questions asked.

Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

The CHAIR. The Committee will rise informally.

The Speaker pro tempore (Mr. SMITH of Missouri) assumed the chair.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

A message in writing from the President of the United States was communicated to the House by Mr. Sherman Williams, one of his secretaries.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Committee will resume its sitting.

NATIONAL STRATEGIC AND CRITICAL MINERALS PRODUCTION ACT OF 2013

The Committee resumed its sitting.

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Chairman, I'm very pleased to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Nevada (Mr. AMODEI).

Mr. AMODEI. Mr. Chairman, only in Washington would we be having a debate about whether 4 years is okay or 2½ years is okay when we're talking about a jobs bill. And only in Washington would we talk about cherry-picking when we're talking about the vast majority of the production that is sought for permitting, and the vast number of jobs that is created is not—I want to make this very clear so the record is clear—is not handled within 3 years.

Now, it may be true that it's less than the Bush administration, which is fine. Let's assume that it is.

But when you're talking about primarily issues that deal with Western lands whose States are at or near a majority of Federal ownership, and you want to talk about the middle class, and you want to talk about generating jobs, and you want to say, hey, by the way, you can take as long as you want; we don't know if you're going to have a job in that industry or not because there are no rules.

Only in Washington would we be defending no time limits whatsoever. To say 30 months is a bad idea, with language that says, if both sides agree, you can take longer, is not an unreasonable environmental or administrative stance.

Nobody wants a nice, crisp denial in 30 months; and by the way, if the application should be denied, then I presume that it will be denied.

But what we're seeing now, and you can find no legislative history for this anywhere in any of the applicable environmental regulations and statutes, of which all still apply, there is nothing that says, by the way, if nothing else works, just see if you can drag it out as long as possible and hope that that capital goes away. Because when you talk about permitting attractiveness, it's not what these folks are those folks say, it's where the capital goes. And the capital isn't going here.

And the strategic interest of having to go to China for your rare-earths or having to go to other countries to produce those is not apparent.