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Hello from Capitol Hill!

JULY/AUGUST 2024

As Congress enters their August recess here in Washington, D.C., we have seen a flurry of activity on Capitol Hill. In this edition of our GeosciencePolicy Newsletter, you will find updates on the federal budget process, hearings about legislation covering critical minerals supply chain development and natural hazards programs, and a list of legislation GSA is tracking.

For more information on any upcoming public policy events, or to review GSA's position statements on major issues, visit www.geosociety.org/policy. If you have information or updates you would like to see discussed in the Geoscience Policy Newsletter, please reach out to sciencepolicy@geosociety.org.

Sincerely,
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AASG Meeting

Representatives from GSA attended the 116th annual meeting of the Association of American State Geologists (AASG) hosted by the Utah Geological Survey. Park City, Utah, provided the backdrop for this meeting, which brought together representatives from state geological surveys and the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). The meeting began with a plenary session featuring updates on a range of topics from the USGS, including:



- An appropriations update from Dr. David Applegate, *Director of the USGS*;
- An update on the Minerals and Energy Mission Area from Dr. Sarah Ryker, *Associate Director, Energy and Minerals Mission Area*;
- An update on the Core Science Systems Mission Area from Darcee Killpack, *Associate Director, Core Science Systems Mission Area*; and
- An update on the Natural Hazards Mission Area from Dr. Jonathan Godt, *Associate Director, Natural Hazards Mission Area*.

The meeting also featured sessions covering new research and the related policy implications on topics including critical minerals, coastal science, data preservation, water, geothermal energy, education and workforce development, geologic mapping, natural hazards programs, and environmental risks. These discussions come at an important time when legislative decisions are currently being made in Congress on several of these topics.

Appropriations Updates



[Read the GSA letter calling for a 2025 budget increase here!](#)

On 24 July, GSA submitted a letter to the Senate Appropriations Committee chair, Senator Patty Murray, and the vice chair, Senator Susan Collins, calling for an increase to the USGS FY2025 budget. Currently, the House version of the bill cuts the USGS budget by 5.5%. While the budget includes a 4% increase for Core Science Activities compared to the FY2024 budget, it also includes deep cuts to natural hazards programs, including the volcano and coastal hazards programs. The Senate version of the funding package, released later that week, includes increases across all major mission areas for the USGS.

[CLICK OR SCAN TO READ THE LATEST UPDATES ON THE FY2025 APPROPRIATIONS PROCESS:](#)



Recent Congressional Hearing Summaries

CRITICAL MINERALS SUPPLY CHAIN HEARING



The House of Representatives Committee on Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Manufacturing and Critical Minerals held a hearing on the national critical mineral supply chain. The hearing included testimony from Matt Vincent of the Montana Mining Association, Dr. Michelle Michot Foss of Rice University, Martin Stratte, a partner at Hunton Andrews Kurth, and David Klanecky, chief executive officer and president of Cirba Solutions.

Key points discussed in the hearing included the strategic importance of these materials for manufacturing and the need for regulatory reform to facilitate domestic mining and processing. Rep. Earl Carter (R-GA-1), who opened the hearing, emphasized the challenge posed by reliance on

countries like China and proposed bolstering America's critical materials supply chains as both an economic and a national security imperative. Rep. Paul Tonko (D-NY-20) echoed many of these sentiments, while highlighting other ways of sustaining critical minerals supplies including recycling products and reducing reliance on certain minerals.



KEY POINTS

The strategic importance of materials for manufacturing



The need for regulatory reform to facilitate domestic mining & processing



NATURAL HAZARDS LEGISLATION



The Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee held a dense hearing just before Congress left for their August recess, covering 32 pieces of legislation. While much of the hearing focused on recent A.I.-related bills, two important pieces of natural hazards legislation were also voted on. The **National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program Reauthorization Act of 2024** and the **National Landslide Preparedness Act Reauthorization Act of 2024** both reauthorize essential programs that work to better understand, mitigate, and recover from natural hazards. Both bills passed committee votes and will advance to be voted on by the full Senate when Congress returns in September.



Chevron Deference Supreme Court Decision

In a 6–3 decision, the Supreme Court upended a 40-year administrative law precedent that gave agencies across the federal government leeway to interpret ambiguous laws through rulemaking. Known as Chevron deference, the now-overturned legal doctrine instructed judges to defer to agencies in cases where the law is ambiguous.

Now, judges will substitute their own best interpretation of the law, instead of deferring to the agencies—effectively making it easier to overturn regulations that govern wide-ranging aspects of American life. This includes rules governing toxic chemicals, climate change, and more. Chevron itself dates back to 1984, when environmental advocates sought to challenge the Reagan administration’s efforts to limit air pollution restrictions. The court defended the agency’s action, arguing that its interpretation of the Clean Air Act should be upheld.

Upcoming Policy Events

GEOSCIENCES CONGRESSIONAL VISITS DAYS 2024 (GEO-CVD)

September 9–10: GEO-CVD participants will partake in a workshop that will offer a foundational understanding of science policy through a series of brief seminars and panels. Participants in GEO-CVD have an opportunity to meet with members of Congress and staff from key congressional offices and committees.



GEOLOGY AND PUBLIC POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING

September 21: The Geology and Public Policy Committee will meet in Anaheim, California, during GSA Connects. The committee will discuss potential updates to position statements that are up for review. This meeting is only open to members of the Geology and Public Policy Committee.



NEW TERRANES: WHERE GEOSCIENCE, SOCIETY, AND POLICY COME TOGETHER

September 22: Attending GSA Connects? Stop by this networking event and connect with others to discuss the nexus of science, society, and policy!



SHAPING A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE WITH GEOLOGY IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY: GEOLOGY AND SOCIETY DIVISION TURNS 21

September 24: This technical session at GSA Connects will include presentations on how geology positively impacts society for a globally sustainable future through workforce training, scientific advancement, resource development, hazard mitigation, energy challenges, climate change analysis, environmental stewardship, infrastructure development, and international collaboration.

Legislation We Are Tracking

GEOTHERMAL ENERGY

- **H.R. 8665** - To amend the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 to direct research, development, demonstration, and commercial application activities in support of supercritical geothermal and closed-loop geothermal systems in supercritical various conditions, and for other purposes.
- **H.R. 7409** - Harnessing Energy at Thermal Sources Act
- **H.R. 6482** - Enhancing Geothermal Production on Federal Lands Act
- **H.R. 7422** - Geothermal Cost-Recovery Authority Act of 2024
- **H.R. 7370** - Geothermal Energy Opportunity Act



CRITICAL MINERALS MINING

- **H.R. 7377** - The Royalty Resiliency Act
- **H.R. 7375** - To amend the Mineral Leasing Act to improve the assessment of expression of interest fees, and for other purposes.



NATURAL HAZARDS

- **S. 3606** - National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program Reauthorization Act of 2024
- **S. 3788** - National Landslide Preparedness Act Reauthorization Act of 2024
- **H.R. 7003** - National Landslide Preparedness Act Reauthorization Act of 2024
- **S. 4191** - Regional Leadership in Wildland Fire Research Act of 2024



INTERNATIONAL SCIENCE

- **S. 2632** - The Visa Processing Improvement Act
- **S. 2384** - The Keep STEM Talent Act

APPROPRIATIONS BILLS

- The Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Acts
- The Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Acts

