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| July 31, 2015 |

**Heller’s GEO Act and Permitting Bills Pass Senate Committee****(Washington, DC)**– Yesterday, U.S. Senator Dean Heller’s (R-NV) [Geothermal Exploration Opportunity (GEO) Act](http://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/pressreleases?ID=a7e6e0b8-827d-461f-ad4e-448243ea4d22) and [Public Land Job Creation Act](http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/BILLS-114s113is/pdf/BILLS-114s113is.pdf) passed the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources as part of the [Energy Policy Modernization Act of 2015](http://www.energy.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?p=legislation&id=87D9E1CF-1B96-4815-9D05-387798EFAEA7). These bills, which Senator Heller introduced at the beginning of the Congress, streamline the review process for energy and mining activities on federal lands. Following committee passage, Senator Heller issued this statement:“Yesterday was a good day for our nation’s geothermal innovators as we are one step closer to streamlining the environmental review process for their exploration efforts. Nevada is leading the charge in the United States’ ‘all-of-the-above’ energy strategy, and this legislation ensures we remain at the top,” said **Senator Dean Heller**. “Along those same lines, we have an abundance of critical and strategic minerals that play a vital role in our daily lives. Streamlining the permitting process to develop these resources is critical to the Silver State’s economic future, and I am pleased these provisions were included in this bipartisan energy bill.”**Background:** * The [GEO Act](http://www.heller.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/9fdfd9fb-e6c4-4ede-bbab-270b65dcb7e2/GEO%20Act%202%2025%2015.pdf) creates a limited categorical exclusion for geothermal exploration activities on public lands so companies can test resources in Nevada and other western states. Under current rules, companies must go through a lengthy environmental review process just to see if a resource is viable, despite causing minimal surface disturbance. That process serves as a significant impediment to the expansion of geothermal energy development.  [The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) estimates nearly 90 percent of the geothermal energy potential in the nation is on federal lands](http://energy.usgs.gov/GeneralInfo/EnergyNewsroomAll/TabId/770/ArtMID/3941/ArticleID/730/Assessment-of-Moderate-and-High-Temperature-Geothermal-Resources-of-the-United-States.aspx). The GEO Act is reflected in [Sec.3012](http://www.energy.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/files/serve?File_id=eb454e3b-7f32-479e-b1a6-e84f9019941d).
* [The Public Lands Job Creation Act](http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/BILLS-114s113is/pdf/BILLS-114s113is.pdf) streamlines the permitting process for mineral and energy development, while also preserving the time necessary for environmental analysis. Specifically, the provision provides the Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest Service forty-five days to complete the review process of permit notices. [Sec.3306](http://www.energy.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/files/serve?File_id=eb454e3b-7f32-479e-b1a6-e84f9019941d) specifically is a modified version of Senator Heller’s bill. The entire Critical Minerals subtitle is based off the American Mineral Security Act of 2015 (S.883), of which Senator Heller is a cosponsor.

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