

American Critical Mineral Exploration and Innovation Act of 2020
Section by Section

Sec. 1. Short Title and Table of Contents.

Sec. 2. Definitions.

TITLE I – Critical Mineral Production

Sec. 101. Policy. – Amends the National Materials and Minerals Policy, Research and Development Act of 1980 to establish analytical and forecasting capabilities to identify critical mineral demand, supply, and other relevant data; avoid duplication of effort and minimize delays in permitting for exploration and development of critical minerals; and establish other policy goals for facilitating the availability and development of critical minerals. It also authorizes the National Science and Technology Council’s “Critical Minerals Subcommittee,” to coordinate Federal efforts to ensure secure and reliable supplies of critical minerals to the United States.

Sec. 102. Critical Mineral Designations. – The Secretary of the Interior, through the Director of the U.S. Geological Survey, shall publish a list of critical minerals and the methodology used for creation of the list. Critical minerals designations shall be determined in consultation with the Secretaries of Defense, Commerce, Agriculture, and Energy and the U.S. Trade Representative, and the list shall be periodically reviewed and updated.

Sec. 103. Resource Assessment. – Within 4 years of enactment, the Secretary shall complete a comprehensive national resource assessment of each critical mineral. These assessments may be periodically updated as new information or datasets become known.

Sec. 104. Permitting. – Directs the lead agency to complete Federal permitting with maximum efficiency and effectiveness, including by establishing and adhering to timelines, clear and quantifiable performance goals, early collaboration with interested parties, and other metrics. This section also allows for a sufficiency determination under NEPA and establishes a framework for a memorandum of agreement between the lead agency, project sponsor, and other appropriate entities.

Sec. 105. Federal Register Process. – Specifies a publication process for applicable information in the Federal Register.

Sec. 106. Department of Energy Critical Minerals Research and Development Program. – The Secretary of Energy shall establish a research and development program to accelerate innovation in advanced critical minerals development strategies and technologies, in order to make better use of domestic resources and eliminate national reliance on minerals and mineral materials that are subject to supply disruptions. Directs the Secretary to establish and operate a DOE Critical Minerals Consortium in coordination with relevant Federal agencies, institutions of higher education, the private sector, and other appropriate entities.

Sec. 107. Critical Minerals Research Database. – Directs the Secretary of Energy, in consultation with the Director of the National Science Foundation, to support the development of a web-based platform to provide access to a secure database of computed information on known and predicted critical minerals and related mineral materials properties and computational tools to accelerate breakthroughs in critical minerals discovery and design.

Sec. 108. Analysis and Forecasting. – Directs the Secretary, in consultation with other agencies, to publish an annual report on critical minerals production, consumption, and recycling patterns. The report shall include 1) as part of the U.S. Geological Survey’s Mineral Commodity Summaries, mineral-specific information on domestic production and demand, supply shortages, market price data, international trends, and other relevant

information, and 2) a comprehensive forecast of projected critical minerals production, consumption, and recycling patterns expected over the next 1-year, 5-year, and 10-year periods.

Section 109. Education and Workforce. – Requires the Secretary of Labor and the Director of the National Science Foundation to develop a curriculum and a program for institutions of higher education to build a strong critical minerals workforce.

Section 110. National Geological and Geophysical Data Preservation Program. - Reauthorizes the National Geological and Geophysical Data Preservation Program through FY 2030.

Section 111. Administration. – Makes administrative and technical corrections.

TITLE II – Critical Minerals Technology Development Support

Section 201. Technology Grants. – Directs the Secretary of the Interior to establish a competitive grant program to conduct studies, research, and demonstration projects related to the production of critical minerals. At least 70% of these technology grants shall be awarded to accredited mining schools and programs for specific research purposes related to critical mineral production.

TITLE III- Management of Federal Mineral Resources

Section 301. Economic and National Security Analysis. – Requires the Secretary of the Interior and/or Secretary of Agriculture, as appropriate, to review mineral resources assessments provided by the U.S. Geological Survey before implementing a mineral withdrawal or finalizing a new or updated Resource Management Plan and consider the economic, strategic and national security value of mineral deposits in the impacted geographic area. Additionally, if a resource assessment uncovers a previously undiscovered mineral deposit within a withdrawal area, the Secretary shall update the relevant Resource Management Plan or, in the case of a withdrawal under the Antiquities Act, provide recommendations to the White House regarding minimizing impacts to potential mineral development.

Section. 302. Congressional Approval. – Prohibits the Secretary of the Interior from imposing a moratorium on the mining of critical minerals on Federally owned lands or waters without the approval of Congress, and limits the acreage impacted by individual mineral withdrawals.