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## House Energy and Mineral Resources Subcommittee discusses oil and gas operations legislation

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On June 6, the House Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources considered four draft bills aimed at streamlining oil and gas production on federal lands. These bills support President Donald Trump's executive order (EO 13783), "Promoting Energy Independence and Economic Growth," to reduce regulations and processes that may hinder domestic energy development. On June 27, the committee approved three of these bills – H.R. 6087, H.R. 6107, and H.R. 6088 – on party line votes.

The first legislative proposal, titled the "Removing Barriers to Energy Independence Act" (H.R. 6087), is sponsored by Representative Liz Cheney (R-WY-At large) and would require a processing fee for individual and organization protests to oil and gas lease sales, applications for drill permits, and right of way applications. Protesters would have to pay a \$150 filing fee for each ten-page submission, as well as a \$5 charge for each additional page. Majority members of the committee suggested that the fee would allow the Department of the Interior to employ a large enough task force to resolve protests in a more timely manner.

The subcommittee also considered a draft bill offered by Representative Steve Pearce (R-NM-2) that seeks to clarify and extend the categorical exclusions for certain oil and gas exploration activities, as outlined in the Energy Policy Act of 2005, to bypass further review under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and streamline the permitting process. In addition, Representative Pearce sponsored the Ending Duplicative Permitting Act (H.R. 6107), which would amend the Mineral Leasing Act of 1920 to prohibit the Bureau of Land Management from requiring drilling permits on land that is less than 50 percent federally owned, thus limiting the BLM's jurisdiction over drilling activities.

Another bill, titled the Streamlining Permitting Efficiencies in Energy Development Act (H.R. 6088), sponsored by Representative John Curtis (R-UT-3), would amend the Mineral Leasing Act of 1920 to allow oil and gas operators to bypass the Application of Permit to Drill (APD) and instead simply submit a Notification of Permit to Drill (NPD) under specific circumstances. According to the majority hearing memo, the processing of APDs by the BLM takes an average of 260 days. The amendment is intended to expedite the permitting process by creating the NPD option for certain projects. This option would reduce or eliminate environmental review processes, such as site inspections, if the project meets a specific set of criteria to be determined by the Secretary of the Interior.

*Sources: E&E News; Environmental Protection Agency; U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Natural Resources.*

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