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Home > House natural resources subcommittee hearing on geothermal energy, geologic mapping, and hazards

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The House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources held a hearing on November 30 to discuss a draft bill to promote timely geothermal energy exploration under federal leases, and three other bills related to geologic mapping and hazards research, monitoring, and response.

H.R.1675, the National Landslide Preparedness Act, would create a national program to identify and understand risks and reduce losses from landslide hazards, and help improve communication and emergency preparedness. The bill would also establish a national 3D Elevation Program (3DEP) to update and produce standard, publicly accessible 3D elevation data for the entire United States. H.R.4403, the National Geologic Mapping Act Reauthorization Act, would reauthorize the National Cooperative Geologic Mapping Program (NCGMP) through fiscal year (FY) 2023. The program works with federal, state, and university partners to produce geologic maps that address key national, regional, and local needs. Finally, the discussion draft of the National Volcano Early Warning and Monitoring System Act would establish a comprehensive national system to organize, modernize, standardize, and stabilize the monitoring systems of U.S. volcano observatories.

These three hazards programs, all led by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) in coordination with other federal agencies such as the National Science Foundation (NSF) and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), are essential for protecting American life and property, ensuring robust infrastructure, and advancing our energy security. In her testimony, Allyson Anderson Book, Executive Director of the American Geosciences Institute (AGI), expressed support for the reauthorization of NCGMP, which provides essential information to the public and private sectors, as well as the bills to establish a national landslide hazards program and a national volcano early warning and monitoring system.

Among the other witnesses on the panel, Dr. David Applegate, Associate Director for Natural Hazards of the USGS, and Steve Masterman, President of the Association of American State Geologists (AASG) and State Geologist of Alaska, both echoed Ms. Book's sentiment regarding the substantial need for geologic mapping, volcano monitoring, and landslide preparedness. Mr. Masterman specified that while the NCGMP has been very productive in its mapping efforts thus far, only 17 percent of the nation is mapped at the detailed scale needed to inform important decisions for land use planning and resource management. Extending geologic mapping across the nation would generate the information required to characterize domestic mineral resources, ensure mineral independence, and thereby aid national security.

Sources: Environmental Protection Agency, House Committee on Natural Resources, Library of Congress
