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Murkowski: Congress Must Act to Reduce America's Foreign Mineral Dependence

U.S. Sen. Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska, today [chaired](#) a hearing to examine the Department of the Interior's final list of critical minerals for 2018 and opportunities to reverse our nation's growing dependence on foreign suppliers. This is the fifth hearing the committee has held on U.S. mineral security in recent years.

"Our foreign dependence has almost doubled in the past two decades alone," [Murkowski said](#). "While these trends were ignored for a long time, the administration has taken several positive steps to reverse the tide. That's a great start, but now it is time for Congress to act."

The U.S. imported 100 percent of 21 different minerals and at least 50 percent of 50 minerals in 2017. This includes technology metals like rare earth elements, for which China currently produces more than 90 percent of the world's supply.

"This is a serious, but needless vulnerability. Many parts of our country, including Alaska, are rich in mineral resources. What we lack is a sense of urgency to ensure that our policies promote their responsible

production,” **Murkowski said.** “The main driver of this problem is our broken federal permitting system, but I believe we can make improvements while still protecting the environment.”

In her testimony, Midas Gold Idaho President and CEO Laurel Sayer referred to milestones in the company’s gold and antimony mining project that have slipped due to delays in the National Environmental Policy Act process.

“I emphasize again for the record that Midas Gold does not support cutting corners or lowering environmental review standards in the United States,” **Sayer said.** “We are here to tell you that mining will not be a viable industry in this nation if we don't find a solution to manage the permitting process with more efficiency.”

Murkowski is chairman of the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources. She has introduced legislation to address our nation’s foreign mineral dependence in multiple Congresses, including this one, and today pointed to the legislative opportunity Congress has in the bicameral conference for the FY 2019 National Defense Authorization Act. An archived video and testimony from today’s hearing are available on the committee’s [website](#). Click [here](#) and [here](#) to view Murkowski’s questions for witnesses.