

November 12, 2024

Dear Representative,

We are writing to express our strong opposition to H.R. 7409, the HEATS Act, which will eliminate all review, public input, and transparency under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for prescribed geothermal development impacting public lands and resources.

The House has already passed several bills to facilitate geothermal energy development, including H.R. 7370, H.R. 6474 and H.R. 7422. While our groups have a range of positions on these bills, they all passed by voice vote. In addition, the Bureau of Land Management is acting on several fronts to speed up geothermal projects administratively, including the development of three categorical exclusions for geothermal development in the past year. H.R. 7409, however, is a partisan concept and was included in H.R. 2811, the Limit, Save, Grow Act, which passed with a bare, partisan majority.

This bill prioritizes speed of geothermal development over all other considerations, including meaningful public input, review of potential impacts, and disclosure to impacted communities and stakeholders by amending the Geothermal Steam Act of 1970. Section 2 of H.R. 7409 would further eliminate not only NEPA, but also the Endangered Species Act and the National Historic Preservation Act for certain geothermal projects, which would effectively prohibit any review or input on millions of acres of split-estate lands.

Application of NEPA to geothermal projects is essential to ensuring that expansion of renewable energy is not only effective and efficient, but also equitable. NEPA ensures that impacted stakeholders are aware of the environmental, health, and economic impacts related to a potential project and, critically, have a voice in how those projects are developed. Geothermal development is not without risk or consequences - it is associated with groundwater pollution, air pollution, as well as seismic activity. Such potential impacts warrant federal and public scrutiny, not reckless deregulation.

Our organizations support a swift and equitable transition to the clean energy economy necessary to address the climate crisis. Rather than facilitate that transition, this bill would silence impacted communities and shield decisions on renewable energy development from the public. What is needed for the clean energy transition is better coordination and implementation of NEPA and related laws, not wholesale deregulation to the benefit of industry and at the expense of the public. We urge you to oppose this bill.

Sincerely,

Center for Biological Diversity
Defenders of Wildlife
Earthjustice
Environmental Law & Policy Center
Food & Water Watch
GreenLatinos
League of Conservation Voters
The Wilderness Society
WE ACT for Environmental Justice