

am proud to report that this bill today is the result of months of hard work with local stakeholders, the Bureau of Reclamation, and Senators Hickenlooper and Romney to provide a long-term solution by reauthorizing these vital programs until 2031.

My bill has significant support from more than 30 Colorado and Western stakeholder organizations, including Denver Water, Pueblo Water, both of the Colorado Indian Tribes, Utah Water Users Association, and many more.

I urge the passage of this critical bipartisan and bicameral legislation.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, I am prepared to close, and I continue to reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. OCASIO-CORTEZ. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support the legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, the Upper Colorado and San Juan River Endangered Fish Recovery Programs are essential to the region's future. These programs have been successful in conserving and recovering endangered species, which is the goal of the Endangered Species Act.

Mr. Speaker, as an Arkansas Razorback, I rise in strong support of this legislation that will continue to help recover the razorback sucker.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. WESTERMAN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 4596, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

AMENDING THE ENERGY POLICY ACT OF 2005 TO EXPEDITE GEOTHERMAL EXPLORATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN PREVIOUSLY STUDIED OR DEVELOPED AREAS

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 6474) to amend the Energy Policy Act of 2005 to expedite geothermal exploration and development in previously studied or developed areas.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 6474

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. NEPA REVIEW.

Section 390 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005 (42 U.S.C. 15942) is amended—

(1) in subsection (a), by inserting “, or the Geothermal Steam Act of 1970 (30 U.S.C. 1001 et seq.) for the purpose of exploration or development of geothermal resources” after “or gas”; and

(2) in subsection (b)—

(A) in paragraph (2), by striking “or gas” and inserting “, gas, or geothermal”; and

(B) in paragraph (3), by striking “or gas” and inserting “, gas, or geothermal”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. WESTERMAN) and the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. OCASIO-CORTEZ) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Arkansas.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on H.R. 6474, the bill now under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Arkansas?

There was no objection.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise today in support of H.R. 6474, which will amend the Energy Policy Act of 2005 to expedite geothermal exploration and development in previously studied or developed areas.

First, I would like to thank my colleague, Representative STEEL, for all the good work she has done on this issue.

Duplicative leasing and the permitting process for geothermal development result in timelines longer than those of many other energy projects. With such a high potential for geothermal access across the country, it is imperative we enact pragmatic reform to give all energy industries the same opportunity.

Categorical exclusions, or CEs, expedite the NEPA process for energy projects when the area being disturbed has already undergone environmental review.

Section 390 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005 granted five different CEs to expedite the development of oil and gas projects.

It is necessary that these fees also apply to geothermal exploration and development because the processes utilized by these two industries are very similar, as is the technology and equipment used to drill.

Establishing categorical exclusions for geothermal energy in areas with existing production or areas that have been recently studied is a responsible way to increase the utilization of geothermal energy, expediting the permitting process without reducing environmental standards.

This bill would expedite the approval process for certain geothermal projects by adding geothermal energy development to section 390.

Again, I applaud my colleague, Mrs. STEEL, for this commonsense and bipartisan bill.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in supporting this bill, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. OCASIO-CORTEZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise to comment on H.R. 6474, Representative STEEL's bill, which aims to

expedite geothermal exploration and development in previously studied or developed areas. I thank my colleague for her attention to this important issue.

I strongly support deploying geothermal energy on Federal lands. We have heard from geothermal developers that there can be challenges when it comes to permitting new geothermal plants. That is exactly why several of the bills we are discussing here today are designed to address those very challenges.

Now, what H.R. 6474 would do is legislate the creation of a new categorical exclusion for certain geothermal-related activities. Categorical exclusions are used when there is a class of actions that Federal agencies have determined do not individually or cumulatively have a significant impact on the human environment, and therefore, do not require either an environmental assessment or an environmental impact statement under the National Environmental Policy Act, or NEPA.

Currently, the oil and gas industries have a relatively narrow categorical exclusion for minor disturbances in already developed oil fields; that is, oil fields that have recently been analyzed under NEPA.

This bill attempts to put geothermal on a level playing field by taking that existing categorical exclusion and applying it basically as is to geothermal.

At the legislative hearing on this bill, the Bureau of Land Management testified that it is skeptical that this policy will provide significant benefits for geothermal because the existing categorical exclusion was designed for oil and gas, and there are considerable differences between those types of energy and geothermal.

Fortunately, the Bureau of Land Management already has the authority to establish new categorical exclusions administratively without the need for legislation.

Using that authority, the Bureau has recently finalized new categorical exclusions for geothermal energy that were adopted from other agencies and are better tailored to this unique type of energy.

The Bureau is currently working on establishing more categorical exclusions to ensure that geothermal can be deployed responsibly and efficiently on Federal land.

While I have some concerns about the expansion of existing categorical exclusions for oil and gas, I strongly support the Bureau of Land Management's work on geothermal, and again, I am grateful for my colleague's attention to this important issue.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. STEEL), the lead sponsor of this bill.

Mrs. STEEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise to urge passage of H.R. 6474, my legislation to expedite geothermal energy growth and development.

Embracing geothermal energy will propel more sustainable, clean, and reliable energy in California and the entire country.

With a sizeable geothermal reservoir, more growth opportunities will allow California to take full advantage of our natural resources.

My bill will also support local economies as production grows. More geothermal power will create and maintain sustainable local jobs.

Geothermal can be an important tool to make America more energy independent and less dependent on our enemies. My legislation will allow my home State of California to seize the reins as the leading national energy provider.

This bill is simple and straightforward. It is just the type of common-sense solution my constituents sent me to Congress to find.

My legislation amends the Energy Policy Act of 2005 to allow for a new categorical exclusion for geothermal under the National Environmental Policy Act.

Specifically, it would create an exemption for geothermal drilling in situations where drilling has occurred within the last 5 years.

□ 2015

This bill will create an expedited approval process for geothermal projects and a more promising energy future for the United States.

I thank my legislative partners, SUSIE LEE, for working with me in a bipartisan manner to support geothermal energy. I also thank Chairman WESTERMAN and House leadership for working with us to advance this legislation. America needs an all-of-the-above energy approach that includes geothermal.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all my colleagues to vote "yes."

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time. I am prepared to close, and I continue to reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. OCASIO-CORTEZ. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support the legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend my colleague from California (Mrs. STEEL) for working across the aisle in this bipartisan, all-of-the-above energy bill. I urge my colleagues to support the bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CRANE). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. WESTERMAN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 6474.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

LAKE TAHOE RESTORATION REAUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (S. 612) to reauthorize the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

S. 612

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Lake Tahoe Restoration Reauthorization Act".

SEC. 2. REAUTHORIZATION OF THE LAKE TAHOE RESTORATION ACT.

(a) COOPERATIVE AUTHORITIES.—Section 4(f) of the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act (Public Law 106-506) is amended by striking "4 fiscal years following the date of enactment of the Water Resources Development Act of 2016" and inserting "period beginning on the date of enactment of this subsection and ending on the date described in section 10(a)".

(b) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—Section 10(a) of the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act (Public Law 106-506) is amended by striking "for a period" and all that follows through the period at the end and inserting "to remain available until September 30, 2034".

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. WESTERMAN) and the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. OCASIO-CORTEZ) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Arkansas.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on S. 612, the bill now under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Arkansas?

There was no objection.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly support S. 612, the Lake Tahoe Restoration Reauthorization Act. This is a bicameral and bipartisan effort being led on the House side by Representatives AMODEI, KILEY, and DUARTE. I applaud their efforts to advance this legislation to the floor. This is a good bill that reauthorizes the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act for another decade, ensuring no lapse in funding for a significant program serving the iconic Lake Tahoe area.

During a hearing on this legislation in the Natural Resources Committee just last week, Julie Regan, the executive director of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, ended her testimony with a quote from Congressman KILEY discussing the importance of Lake Tahoe to his community. Congressman KILEY is quoted as saying:

We can get past the political divides by implementing projects of common importance at a local level. Tahoe is the perfect example. Spanning two States, multiple overlap-

ping jurisdictions, and red and blue counties. Yet we can all agree on the goal of protecting something that is larger than us. That transcends political differences.

I could not agree more with Congressman KILEY's sentiment. I have had the pleasure of seeing the great work in Lake Tahoe firsthand, and the collaboration occurring in the Tahoe basin is truly a model of forest management for the rest of the Nation.

S. 612 will help ensure the continued funding for restoration and resilience activities around Lake Tahoe, including critical work mitigating wildfire risk and restoring forest health. The bill also extends the authorization to enter into contracts and cooperative agreements with States and local governments to conduct fuel reduction, erosion control, and reforestation activities.

Again, I want to commend Representatives AMODEI, KILEY, and DUARTE for working with their bipartisan and bicameral colleagues to advance this important forest management effort and secure the swift consideration of this legislation in the Natural Resources Committee and on the House floor.

Mr. Speaker, I support this bill, and I reserve the balance of my time.

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND
INFRASTRUCTURE,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, September 20, 2024.

Hon. BRUCE WESTERMAN,
Chairman, Committee on Natural Resources,
Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN WESTERMAN: I write to you concerning S. 612, the Lake Tahoe Restoration Reauthorization Act. The bill was referred primarily to the Committee on Natural Resources, with additional referrals to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure and Committee on Agriculture. Specifically, provisions of S. 612 fall within the Rule X jurisdiction of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

I recognize and appreciate your desire to bring this legislation before the House of Representatives in an expeditious manner, and accordingly, the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure will forgo action on the bill. However, this is conditional on our mutual understanding that doing so will not prejudice the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure with respect to the appointment of conferees or to any future jurisdictional claim over the subject matter contained within the bill or similar legislation that falls under the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure's Rule X jurisdiction. Further, should a conference on the bill be necessary, I appreciate your agreement to support my request to have the Committee represented on the conference committee.

Finally, I would ask that a copy of this letter and your response acknowledging our jurisdictional interest in the bill be included in the Committee Report and Congressional Record during consideration of S. 612 on the House floor.

Sincerely,

SAM GRAVES,
Chairman, Committee on Transportation
and Infrastructure.