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"Critical minerals are vital to renewable energy production and the ability to implement an all-of-the above energy strategy. Much like our dangerous dependence on oil from the Middle East, the United States' reliance on China for critical minerals should be a serious cause of concern for every American."

[The importance of domestic minerals production](#)

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Rep. Doc Hastings and Rep. Doug Lamborn

Have you ever stopped to think about what allows your cell phone battery to keep a charge or how a hybrid vehicle can combine a gasoline engine and battery power to yield 51 miles per gallon? These and countless other advanced technologies share a common ingredient that allows them to continue to expand and innovate - the need for critical minerals.

Minerals are an essential part of Americans' everyday lives. From the time you brush your teeth in the morning until you set your alarm clock in the evening, you are surrounded by critical minerals. These minerals are found in everyday products like toothpaste, clocks, phones, and televisions and are also essential components of renewable energy technologies, life-saving medical devices, and the equipment used to protect our men and women in the Armed Forces. The production of these minerals occurs all over the United States, from gold mines in Alaska and Colorado to copper and marble in Washington.

The United States is blessed with an abundance of these important minerals, and has some of the largest known resources in the world. Yet, despite these resources and the growing need for domestic supplies, American mineral exploration and production has come to a standstill over the last two decades while foreign mineral exploration has exploded.

Today, the United States relies on foreign countries like China for over half of our non-fuel mineral materials and is entirely dependent on foreign sources for rare earth metals. In fact, China currently controls 97 percent of the entire world's rare earths supply.

To illustrate the dangers of this dependence, you need to look no further than China's recent diplomatic spat with Japan. Two years ago, China began to intentionally reduce their exports of rare earth elements and eventually completely cut off exports to Japan after a contentious dispute. This reduction in output caused the global price of rare earth minerals to soar and sparked fears worldwide about the vulnerability in the rare earths market.

With vast amounts of minerals in the United States, why are we relying on foreign countries for our domestic supply? The truth is that many actions have contributed to the

current state of our mineral dependence. Decade-long delays and lack of assessments for permitting timelines, frivolous unchecked litigation, and a simple lack of federal guidance towards a national mineral policy are just a few of the factors that have hindered domestic exploration and production.

Weakened national security is not the only consequence of our actions. Our failure to address this issue has also delayed the creation of countless good paying American jobs. The United States mining industry currently supports over 700,000 jobs nationwide and is an integral part of a healthy economy and diverse industrial sector. There is no doubt that the development of our abundant mineral resources would have an immediate positive impact on both job creation and economic development.

House Republicans believe there is a better approach. We believe we can reduce our dependence on foreign minerals and create American jobs by developing our own resources. That's why we recently introduced the National Strategic and Critical Minerals Policy Act of 2011, legislation that will promote domestic production of minerals vital to our economy and clean energy development.

The National Strategic and Critical Minerals Policy Act of 2011 will address the increased global demands for strategic and critical minerals by requiring the government to do a nationwide survey of our domestic supplies, review the United States' ability to meet our growing minerals needs, and identify the obstacles that are hindering us from domestic development of those mineral resources.

This legislation is a part of House Republicans' American Energy Initiative, a series of bills that aim to expand production of all types of American energy in order to create jobs and lower costs. Critical minerals are vital to renewable energy production and the ability to implement an all-of-the above energy strategy.

Much like our dangerous dependence on oil from the Middle East, the United States' reliance on China for critical minerals should be a serious cause of concern for every American.

We must act now to address this problem in order to ensure economic stability, create good-paying jobs and improve national security for future generations.

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