

Permitting reform and extractivism

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The Trump Administration and many members of Congress are determined to make it easier to build new energy infrastructure and mine on public land.

One pathway is under the banner of “permitting reform.” While sounding like benign bureaucratic changes, in practice, this approach could reduce public input, weaken environmental protections and limit the ability of communities to sue over projects they fear threaten their health, culture and livelihoods.

A [permitting reform bill in 2024](#) earned bipartisan support for aiming to reduce the time needed to get approvals for fossil fuel projects and solar and wind projects alike. Congress failed to pass the bill.

The current administration and Congress are prioritizing speeding up permitting for fossil fuel projects, while renewable energy projects are being held up or scrapped altogether. That has made many Democratic legislators skeptical of any bills introduced, and [negotiations in the Senate stalled until recently](#).

Similarly, the Trump Administration has taken steps to [expand mining on public lands](#). They seek to overhaul public land management to prioritize mineral exploration, extraction, and processing above all other uses, including recreation and conservation.

Congress is looking to put these directives into law through a variety of mechanisms. One is the Congressional Review Act, which [allows legislators to overturn regulations](#) within a certain time period of them being issued. This is being used now to open up land for mining that previous administrations had ruled was off limits.

Congress is also introducing bills to expand mining of minerals deemed “critical” for national security and advanced technology like artificial intelligence (AI). In previous years, these minerals were mostly touted as key for the transition from fossil fuels to a renewable energy economy, but those talking points largely have been replaced by narratives around the need to have secure supply chains for the military and to lessen dependence on China.

Environmental justice is the term used to describe the disproportionate burden caused by pollution and other harms and placed on People of Color and people with low

incomes. Organizations and communities concerned about environmental justice fear that these attempts to speed up permitting and mining approvals will gut the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). NEPA is a bedrock environmental law that allows federal agencies to analyze the full range of impacts of major federal government actions and projects before issuing approvals.

For more information on the harms of mining, oil and gas drilling and other forms of extractivism, please check out Mercy's [Awakening to a New Consciousness on Extractivism resources](#).