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IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

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SEPTEMBER 17, 2026

Reported by Mr. LEE, without amendment

AN ACT

To promote responsible geothermal energy development on public lands, and for other purposes.

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 ''Geothermal Energy Advancement Act''.

SEC. 2. EFFECT OF PENDING CIVIL ACTIONS ON PROCESSING APPLICATIONS RELATED TO GEOTHERMAL LEASING.

Section 4 of the Geothermal Steam Act of 1970 (30 U.S.C. 1003) is amended by adding at the end the following:

"(h) EFFECT OF PENDING CIVIL ACTIONS ON PROCESSING APPLICATIONS RELATED TO GEOTHERMAL LEASING.—

"(1) REQUIREMENT TO PROCESS APPLICATIONS.—Notwithstanding the existence of any pending civil action that affects an application for a geothermal drilling permit, sundry notice, notice to proceed, right-of-way, or any other authorization under a valid existing geothermal lease, the Secretary shall, unless a United States Federal court vacates or provides injunctive relief for the applicable geothermal lease, geothermal drilling permit, sundry notice, notice to proceed, right-of-way, or other authorization, approve and issue, or deny, each such application not later than 60 days after completing all requirements under applicable Federal laws and regulations, including the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, the Endangered Species Act of 1973, and division A of subtitle III of title 54, United States Code.

"(2) NO NEW AUTHORITY FOR FEDERAL COURTS.—Nothing in this subsection shall be construed as modifying any existing authority of a Federal court to vacate or provide injunctive relief for a geothermal lease, geothermal drilling permit, sundry notice, notice to proceed, right-of-way, or other authorization.

"(3) DEFINITION OF AUTHORIZATION.—In this subsection, the term 'authorization' means any license, permit, approval, finding, determination, or other administrative decision issued by a Federal agency, or any interagency consultation, that is required or authorized under Federal law or regulations in order to site, construct, reconstruct, or commence operations of a geothermal project administered by a Federal agency.".

SEC. 3. COST RECOVERY FROM GEOTHERMAL LEASING, PERMITTING, AND INSPECTIONS.

Section 6 of the Geothermal Steam Act of 1970 (30 U.S.C. 1005) is amended by adding at the end the following:

"(j) COST RECOVERY.—

"(1) IN GENERAL.—During the period that begins on the date of enactment of this subsection and ends September 30, 2033, the Secretary may require

an applicant for, or a holder of, a geothermal lease to reimburse the United States for all reasonable administrative and other costs incurred by the United States from—

"(A) processing the application for the geothermal lease, including any application for an operations plan, geothermal drilling permit, utilization plan, site license, facility construction permit, commercial use permit, and any other approval associated with a geothermal lease; and

"(B) inspecting and monitoring—

"(i) geophysical exploration activities;

"(ii) the drilling, plugging, and abandonment of wells; and

"(iii) the construction, operation, termination, and reclamation of any well site or facility for the utilization of geothermal resources pursuant to the geothermal lease.

"(2) CONSIDERATIONS.—In determining whether to require reimbursement under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall consider whether there is in existence a cooperative cost share agreement between

the United States and the holder of a geothermal lease.

"(3) ADJUSTMENTS.—The Secretary may reduce the amount to be reimbursed under paragraph (1) if the Secretary determines—

"(A) that full reimbursement would impose an economic hardship on the applicant; or

"(B) that a less than full reimbursement is necessary to promote the greatest use of geothermal resources.

"(4) USE.—The amounts reimbursed under this subsection shall be credited to the currently applicable appropriation, account, or fund of the Department of the Interior as discretionary offsetting collections, and shall be available only to the extent provided in advance in appropriations Acts for—

"(A) processing the application for geothermal leases, including any application for operations plans, geothermal drilling permits, utilization plans, site licenses, facility construction permits, commercial use permits, and any other approval associated with geothermal leases; and

"(B) inspecting and monitoring—

"(i) geophysical exploration activities;

"(ii) the drilling, plugging, and abandonment of wells; and

"(iii) the construction, operation, termination, and reclamation of any well site or facility for the utilization of geothermal resources pursuant to geothermal leases.".

SEC. 4. REPORT.

(a) REPORT.—Not later than 5 years after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of the Interior, in consultation with the geothermal industry and other stakeholders, shall submit to the Committee on Natural Resources of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources of the Senate, and make publicly available on the website of the Department of the Interior, a report that includes—

(1) an assessment of how the amendments made by section 3 of this Act affected the Bureau of Land Management's geothermal program;

(2) any recommendations for reauthorization of section 6(j) of the Geothermal Steam Act of 1970, as added by this Act; and

(3) any other recommendations for updates to such section and the Bureau of Land Management's geothermal program.

(b) CONSIDERATIONS.—In developing the report required in subsection (a), the Secretary of the Interior shall solicit facts or information from the geothermal industry and other stakeholders.

SEC. 5. PUBLICATION OF "GOLD BOOK" FOR GEOTHERMAL OPERATIONS ON FEDERAL LANDS.

(a) IDENTIFICATION.—Not later than one year after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of the Interior, in consultation with other relevant Federal agencies, shall identify standard procedures and guidelines for efficient and environmentally responsible geothermal leasing and permitting to the extent such standard procedures and guidelines are not addressed in the fourth edition of the Bureau of Land Management's ''Surface Operating Standards and Guidelines for Oil and Gas Exploration and Development'', commonly known as the ''Gold Book'' and last revised in 2007.

(b) PUBLICATION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 270 days after identifying standard procedures and guidelines under subsection (a), the Secretary of the Interior shall publish an updated version of the Gold Book incorporating any changes necessary to support efficient and environmentally responsible geothermal leasing and permitting for use by the field offices of

the Bureau of Land Management and geothermal operators.

(2) RENAMING GOLD BOOK.—The Secretary of the Interior shall rename the Gold Book to reflect the incorporation of standard procedures and guidelines related to geothermal development.

(c) CONSULTATION.—Before publishing an updated version of the Gold Book, the Secretary of the Interior shall consult with—

(1) other relevant Federal agencies, including field offices of the Bureau of Land Management; and

(2) outside stakeholders, including developers and other experts.

(d) INCLUSIONS.—Each updated version of the Gold Book shall include standard procedures and guidelines for ensuring the efficient review and approval of environmentally responsible geothermal development, including—

(1) exploration and geophysical operations;

(2) permitting lease operations;

(3) compliance with all applicable laws and regulations;

(4) construction and maintenance; and

(5) drilling, production, and utilization operations.

(e) PERIODIC REVISION.—The Secretary of the Interior shall—

(1) at least once every five years, review the most recent version of the Gold Book; and

(2) if determined necessary by the Secretary of the Interior to support efficient and environmentally responsible geothermal leasing and permitting, publish an updated version of the Gold Book.

SEC. 6. GEOTHERMAL OMBUDSMAN AND PERMITTING TASK FORCE.

(a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) GEOTHERMAL AUTHORIZATION.—The term ''geothermal authorization'' means any license, permit, approval, finding, determination, or other administrative decision issued by the Bureau of Land Management and any interagency consultation that is required or authorized under Federal law in order to site, construct, reconstruct, or commence operations of a geothermal energy project administered by the Bureau of Land Management.

(2) GEOTHERMAL ENERGY PROJECT.—The term ''geothermal energy project'' means a project wholly or partially located on public land that uses geothermal energy to generate heat or electricity.

(3) PUBLIC LAND.—The term ''public land'' means lands subject to geothermal leasing under section 3 of the Geothermal Steam Act of 1970 (30 U.S.C. 1002).

(4) SECRETARY.—The term ''Secretary'' means the Secretary of the Interior.

(5) TASK FORCE.—The term ''Task Force'' means the Geothermal Permitting Task Force established under subsection (c).

(b) GEOTHERMAL OMBUDSMAN.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 60 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall appoint from within the Bureau of Land Management a Geothermal Ombudsman.

(2) DUTIES.—The Geothermal Ombudsman appointed under paragraph (1) shall—

(A) act as a liaison between—

(i) the individual field, district, and State offices of the Bureau of Land Management;

(ii) the Division Chief of the National Renewable Energy Coordination Office of the Bureau of Land Management; and

(iii) the Director of the Bureau of Land Management;

(B) provide dispute resolution services between the individual field, district, and State offices of the Bureau of Land Management and applicants for geothermal authorizations;

(C) monitor and facilitate permit processing practices and timelines across individual field offices of the Bureau of Land Management;

(D) develop best practices for the permitting and leasing process for geothermal resources; and

(E) coordinate with the Federal Permitting Improvement Steering Council.

(c) GEOTHERMAL PERMITTING TASK FORCE.—

(1) ESTABLISHMENT.—Not later than 60 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall establish within the Bureau of Land Management a Geothermal Permitting Task Force.

(2) LEADERSHIP.—The Task Force shall be headed by the Geothermal Ombudsman appointed under subsection (b).

(3) PERMITTING SUPPORT.—The Task Force shall support the duties of the Geothermal Ombudsman appointed under subsection (b).

(4) CROSS-OFFICE PERSONNEL ASSIGNMENTS.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—In their capacity as head of the Task Force, the Geothermal Ombudsman may coordinate with any Departmental bureau or office to assign personnel with relevant expertise to assist with completion of geothermal authorizations in field, district, or State offices other than the official duty station where such personnel are located if—

(i) the Departmental bureau or office determines that such assignment will not materially delay ongoing completion of authorizations within the office where the employee is located; and

(ii) approval is received from the head of the official duty station where the assigned employee is located.

(B) ASSIGNED PERSONNEL REQUIREMENTS.—Department personnel assigned to assist with completion of geothermal authorizations under subparagraph (A) shall—

(i) work in-person full-time at an official Department office;

(ii) if necessary as determined by the Geothermal Ombudsman, travel to the Bureau of Land Management field, district, or State office with jurisdiction over the geothermal authorization to which the employee has been assigned by the Geothermal Ombudsman;

(iii) participate as part of the team of personnel working on geothermal authorizations to which the employee has been assigned by the Geothermal Ombudsman; and

(iv) regularly report to the head of the field, district, or State office of the Bureau of Land Management with jurisdiction over geothermal authorizations to which the employee has been assigned by the Geothermal Ombudsman.

(C) RETENTION ALLOWANCES.—

(i) IN GENERAL.—Subject to the availability of appropriations, the Geothermal Ombudsman may pay a retention allowance to an employee assigned to assist with the completion of geothermal author-

1 izations under subparagraph (A). Reten-
2 tion allowances—
3 (I) shall be stated as the percent-
4 age of the rate of basic pay of an em-
5 ployee, and may not exceed 25 percent
6 of such rate of basic pay;
7 (II) may not be considered to be
8 part of the basic pay of an employee,
9 and the reduction or elimination of a
10 retention allowance may not be ap-
11 pealed; and
12 (III) shall be paid at the same
13 time and in the same manner as the
14 employee's basic pay is paid.
15 (ii) CONSIDERATIONS.—In exercising
16 the retention allowance authority described
17 in clause (i), the Geothermal Ombudsman
18 shall consider—
19 (I) an employee's specialized ex-
20 pertise related to geothermal author-
21 izations;
22 (II) the demonstrated need to re-
23 tain an employee to meet the perform-
24 ance improvement objectives for geo-
25 thermal authorization timelines and

1 develop best practices for completion
2 of geothermal authorizations; and
3 (III) the difficulty in recruiting
4 or replacing qualified personnel with
5 relevant expertise related to geo-
6 thermal authorizations.
7 (D) SAVINGS CLAUSE.—Cross-office per-
8 sonnel assignments carried out under this para-
9 graph shall not alter the underlying jurisdiction
10 of other offices of the Bureau of Land Manage-
11 ment over applicable geothermal authorizations.
12 (d) REPORT.—The Geothermal Ombudsman shall
13 submit to the Committee on Energy and Natural Re-
14 sources of the Senate and the Committee on Natural Re-
15 sources of the House of Representatives an annual report
16 that describes the activities of the Task Force and evalu-
17 ates the effectiveness of geothermal permit processing dur-
18 ing the preceding 1-year period.
19 **SEC. 7. GEOTHERMAL ROYALTIES.**
20 (a) DEFINITIONS.—Section 2 of the Geothermal
21 Steam Act of 1970 (30 U.S.C. 1001) is amended by add-
22 ing at the end the following:
23 ''(h) 'Geothermal electric generating facility'
24 means a facility, including all necessary equipment
25 or structures (including turbines and cooling equip-

ment), that produces electricity using geothermal resources. For purposes of section 5(a)(1), a facility described in the preceding sentence shall be considered a separate facility from any other such facility unless the facility shares a turbine with any other such facility.

"(i) 'In-service date' means, with respect to a geothermal electric generating facility, the date on which the geothermal electric generating facility begins operating.".

(b) GEOTHERMAL ROYALTIES.—Section 5(a)(1) of the Geothermal Steam Act of 1970 (30 U.S.C. 1004(a)(1)) is amended—

(1) in subparagraph (A)—

(A) by inserting "with respect to a geothermal electric generating facility producing electricity from such resources," before "not less than";

(B) by inserting "by the geothermal electric generating facility" after "produced"; and

(C) by striking "the first 10 years of production under the lease" and inserting "each year of the 10-year period following the in-service date of the geothermal electric generating facility"; and

(2) in subparagraph (B)—

(A) by inserting ''with respect to a geothermal electric generating facility producing electricity from such resources,'' before ''not less than'';

(B) by inserting ''by the geothermal electric generating facility'' after ''produced''; and

(C) by striking ''such 10-year period'' and inserting ''the period of 10 years described in subparagraph (A)''.

SEC. 8. 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''.

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