

**Testimony Submitted on Behalf of  
The Minerals Science and Information Coalition**  
By Dr. P. Patrick Leahy, Chair

**To the United States Senate  
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations**  
April 30, 2015

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on the importance of minerals science and statistical information to the economy and national security. **The Minerals Science and Information Coalition (MSIC)**, an *ad hoc* group representing both upstream and downstream minerals interests, respectfully submits this testimony in favor of increased funding for the Mineral Resources Program in the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS).

MSIC and its members are united in support of minerals science and information functions in the federal government. Minerals and their materials form the basis of critical infrastructure and advanced technologies upon which we rely. The United States is the world's largest user of mineral commodities. Aggregates for bridges and roads, metals for pipelines and transportation, and elements for computers and defense systems contribute to our national security, economy, and overall global competitiveness. Despite our dependence on these materials, the U.S. has not invested the necessary funds in programs to identify and characterize our mineral wealth and quantify the domestic and global supply of, demand for, and flow of minerals and mineral materials. The nation lacks the infrastructure necessary to support advanced mineral forecasting, leaving important supply chains susceptible to disruptions. Increased federal investments in minerals science and research are necessary to overcome this liability. **MSIC supports the President's request of \$47.7 million for the USGS Mineral Resources Program, but suggests that new investments be made in the USMIN Project to continue development of a comprehensive minerals database and the National Minerals Information Center (NMIC) to create minerals forecasting capabilities.**

NMIC is the world's premier source of statistical information on current production and consumption of mineral commodities for more than 180 countries. U.S. manufacturers and financial firms, as well as federal, state, and local agencies, such as the Department of Defense, the Department of State, and the Department of Transportation use this information as a guide to economic and strategic decision making. The ability to accurately forecast minerals' availability ahead of supply disruptions for these vital organizations is currently nonexistent. By comparison, in FY 2015, the Energy Information Administration (EIA) received \$117 million for energy information and forecasting, whereas the budget for minerals information at USGS was \$15 million with no provision for minerals forecasting. NMIC's information gathering and analysis functions must be strengthened in FY 2016, and it is essential that new money be provided to fund minerals forecasting.

MSIC notes the success of the Critical Materials Institute (CMI) at the Ames National Laboratory and suggests equal investments be made in upstream minerals information and research. The CMI is tasked with creating alternatives to and streamlining the efficiency of materials that are vulnerable to supply disruptions, including rare earth elements. This one-sided approach to supply chain management ignores

the critical upstream research and analysis necessary to identify these high-risk resources in the first place. Additionally, there is little point in developing new materials if we cannot supply the raw materials to manufacture them. The USGS is uniquely positioned to provide the up-to-date forecasts on potential mineral disruptions and to provide the essential geological research and information to help locate and characterize sources of critical minerals. MSIC suggests the creation of a Critical Minerals initiative within the USGS to complement DOE's Critical Materials Institute.

**We support \$25 million per year to fund a Critical Minerals initiative at USGS.** Federal investment in critical mineral resources should, at a minimum, match federal investment in critical materials.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony to the Subcommittee. If you would like any additional information for the record, please contact Dr. P. Patrick Leahy ([pleahy@agiweb.org](mailto:pleahy@agiweb.org)), American Geosciences Institute, 4220 King Street, Alexandria, VA 22303. 703-379-2480.

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