

**Testimony Submitted on Behalf of
The Minerals Science and Information Coalition**

Submitted by Dr. P. Patrick Leahy, Chair

**To the United States Senate
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies**

20 April 2016

On behalf of the undersigned members of the Minerals Science and Information Coalition, thank you for the opportunity to submit a written statement for the record on fiscal year 2017 appropriations for the Mineral Resources Program within the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS).

The **Minerals Science and Information Coalition** (MSIC or the Coalition) is a broad-based alliance of minerals and materials interests united in advocating for reinvigorated minerals science and information functions in the federal government. Our group is comprised of trade associations, scientific and professional societies, groups representing the extractive industries, processors, manufacturers, other mineral and material supply-chain users, and other consumers of federal minerals science and information.

MSIC supports the President's request for \$49 million for the U.S. Geological Survey's Mineral Resources Program, and respectfully requests that Congress add \$5 million in new funding to create minerals forecasting capabilities as well as new investments in the USMIN project to continue development of a comprehensive national mineral resource database.

Minerals are part of virtually all the products we use every day, acting as the raw materials for manufacturing processes or as the end products themselves. Minerals are critical ingredients in specialized applications for national defense and energy technologies, as well as essential building blocks for buildings, roads and civic infrastructure projects. They are used in the manufacture of paper, glass, ceramics, plastics, refined metals, and a host of intermediary materials. These, in turn, find their way into the manufactured products that make up our daily lives, such as automobiles, mobile phones, and computers. Every sector of industry relies on a variety of minerals to generate their end products, making a stable and reliable supply of minerals vital for the continued growth and success of our economy.

The recent crisis in the global supply of rare earth elements caused by Chinese export restrictions is a case study in the importance of a stable mineral supply chain. Supply chains can be long, complex, and vulnerable to disruption for many reasons. The restrictions in the supply of rare earth elements threatened the production of components essential for U.S. defense systems, in addition to a vast array of communications, clean energy, electronics, automotive, and medical products. Both the private and the public sectors realize that we must reduce risks to key minerals supply chains. However, we cannot do this without accurate, timely information on the nature, location, and characteristics of our domestic mineral resources, and on the worldwide supply of, demand for, and flow of minerals and materials. This information is the foundation for

identifying and anticipating existing and emerging vulnerabilities, and for sound decision making by business leaders and policy makers.

USGS Mineral Resources Program

The USGS plays a central role in providing the fundamental information that allows our business leaders and government institutions to make informed natural resource decisions. It is the Minerals Science and Information Coalition's belief that prioritizing both the science and information components of USGS's Mineral Resources Program is vitally important to our national defense and economic well-being.

Minerals science covers the full life cycle of minerals from the discovery of mineral deposits to the disposal of mineral products, including understanding how mineral deposits are formed, the nature and location of mineral deposits, and the environmental issues associated with responsible mineral extraction. The Mineral Resources Program has a long and distinguished history of research and assessment of our nation's mineral resources. According to a National Science and Technology Council¹ report issued in March this year, an overarching trend in mineral production between 1996 and 2013 has been the concentration of production in countries with higher governance (geopolitical and regulatory) risk. **This means that the risk of possible disruption to our mineral supply is rising. Therefore, it is vital that we invest in understanding our domestic resources to build resilient supply chains.**

The National Minerals Information Center (NMIC) is the premier source of information on the worldwide supply of, demand for, and flow of minerals and materials. The consistency and reliability of NMIC's data over decades is one of its greatest strengths. Its data and products are used throughout the federal government to support economic, national security, and land-use decision making. It is also critical to private sector investment and financial institutions. However, in spite of our expanding use of a range of critical and strategic mineral commodities that are essential to keep up our defense, economy, and wellbeing, NMIC does not have the resources needed to develop a robust forecasting function for the minerals sector. **Therefore, we strongly urge additional new funding of \$5 million for NMIC to support advanced mineral flow analysis and the development of minerals forecasting capability within the U.S. Geological Survey.**

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), American Geosciences Institute, 4220 King Street, Alexandria, VA 22302. (703) 379-2480.

American Chemical Society
American Exploration & Mining Association
American Geosciences Institute
American Physical Society

¹ National Science and Technology Council, Committee on Environment, Natural Resources, and Sustainability, Subcommittee on Critical and Strategic Mineral Supply Chains. 2016. Assessment of Critical Minerals: Screening Methodology and Initial Application. Office of Science and Technology Policy, 57 p.

Industrial Minerals Association – North America
Materials Research Society
National Mining Association
National Stone, Sand and Gravel Association
Society for Mining, Metallurgy & Exploration, Inc.