

September 17, 2025

The Honorable Chris Wright
Secretary
U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, D.C. 20585

Dear Secretary Wright:

I write today to request an update regarding the status of the Department of Energy's (DOE) conditional loan guarantee for the Thacker Pass lithium mine, located in Humboldt County, Nevada. As you are aware, DOE's Loan Program Office previously closed a \$2.26 billion loan with Lithium Nevada Corporation for the financing and construction of processing facilities at the site of the largest known source of lithium in North America.¹ This builds on the Bureau of Land Management's Record of Decision, issued during the first Trump Administration on January 15, 2021.² Once operational, the Thacker Pass processing plant is projected to produce approximately 40,000 tons of lithium carbonate annually, contributing to approximately 1,800 construction jobs and 360 operational jobs in Nevada.

The Thacker Pass project comes at a critical time for American energy dominance, as a recent report determined that the Communist Party of China processes approximately 65 percent of the world's lithium supply.³ As summarized by *Fox News*, "Beyond powering drones, handheld radios, and electric vehicles, lithium is critical in strategic military systems: lithium-ion batteries are used in grid support for bases and emerging directed-energy weapons."⁴ The Thacker Pass project is essential to strengthening domestic supply chains and reducing reliance on foreign materials and foreign countries. In fact, the administration's executive order from March 20, 2025 underscores this point:

"The United States possesses vast mineral resources that can create jobs, fuel prosperity, and significantly reduce our reliance on foreign nations. Transportation, infrastructure, defense capabilities, and the next generation of technology rely upon a secure, predictable, and affordable supply of minerals."⁵

¹ Lithium Americas Closes \$2.26 Billion U.S. DOE ATVM Loan. Last modified October 28, 2024. <https://lithiumamericas.com/news/news-details/2024/Lithium-Americas-Closes-2.26-Billion-U.S.-DOE-ATVM-Loan/default.aspx>.

² https://eplanning.blm.gov/public_projects/1503166/200352542/20033308/250039507/Thacker_Pass_Project_ROD_signed_2021-01-15.pdf

³ Dezenski, Elaine K., and Josh Birenbaum. "Unplugging Beijing - A Playbook to Reclaim America's Advanced Battery Supply Chain." Foundation for Defense of Democracies. Last modified July 21, 2025. <https://www.fdd.org/analysis/2025/07/21/unplugging-beijing/>.

⁴ Phillips, Morgan. "China controls over 80% of battery materials crucial to US defense equipment, unsettling report reveals." Fox News. Last modified July 23, 2025. <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/china-controls-over-80-battery-materials-crucial-us-defense-equipment-unsettling-report-reveals>.


⁵ White House Executive Order - "Immediate Measures to Increase American Mineral Production", March 20, 2025. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/03/immediate-measures-to-increase-american-mineral-production/>

We share a common interest in creating American-based critical mineral supply chains to ensure our nation's critical mineral needs are met through domestically-sourced extraction, processing, manufacturing, and mineral recycling. The loan provided by DOE further supports our mutual goal by guaranteeing that crucial segments of our long-sought domestic lithium supply chain will be fulfilled at home, while also reducing risk from foreign influence while furthering America's energy security and technological advancement. Without this vital investment, we will cede our efforts in this space to foreign adversaries and competitors who have already taken considerable strides in cornering the market on critical mineral development and processing.

I understand there have been recent considerations whether to reassess details concerning the loan. The uncertainty that has arisen around whether the loan will be made active potentially puts into question whether the company's already sizeable contributions and investments within the local community may be wasted should the mine not come online.

Thank you for your immediate attention to this critical matter.

Sincerely,



Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator