

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 24, 2020

The Honorable Mark Esper
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Esper:

We are writing to urge the Department of Defense (DoD) to support the full range of domestic rare earths supply chain development, from extraction through separation and purification into the magnets, metals and alloyed forms of rare earths that are critical to our advanced weapons platforms.

It is clear that our dependence on China for vital rare earths threatens our U.S. manufacturing and defense industrial base. As the October 2018 Defense Industrial Base (DIB) Report states: “China represents a significant and growing risk to the supply of materials deemed strategic and critical to U.S. national security.”

Currently, the U.S. has only one operating rare earth mine and no domestic refining capacity, resulting in rare earth concentrate extracted in California being sent to China for processing. As DoD acts to support the reestablishment of a domestic rare earths supply chain, it must take care that no link in the chain passes through a country that presents risk of supply disruption. Priority consideration should be given to projects that extract and process rare earths from U.S. sources and at U.S. facilities.

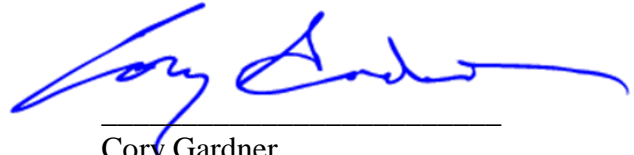
As the U.S. is 100% import-dependent for rare earths as well as 13 other metals and minerals on the U.S. Government Critical Minerals List and more than 75% import reliant for an additional 10 minerals, the DoD should support the near-term resumption of a robust domestic production and processing capacity through the procurement, installation and qualification of production equipment for pilot projects that can produce the full range of rare earth elements as well as other critical minerals judged by DoD to be of particular strategic importance.

Ensuring a U.S. supply of domestically sourced rare earths will reduce our vulnerability to supply disruptions that poses a grave risk to our military readiness. Should the U.S. develop a more robust domestic rare earths supply chain it is important that the federal government does not pick winners and losers within the industry. We thank you for your attention to this issue, and we look forward to working with you and the Department.

Sincerely,



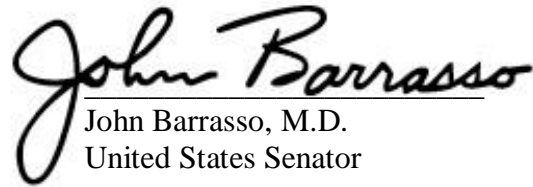
Ted Cruz
United States Senator



Cory Gardner
United States Senator



Mike Enzi
United States Senator



John Barrasso, M.D.
United States Senator



Tom Cotton
United States Senator



Martha McSally
United States Senator