



Citizens' Climate Lobby

Geothermal Amendments to Energy Policy Act of 2005

H.R. 6474

Geothermal Amendments to Energy Policy Act of 2005 (H.R. 6474), introduced by Reps. Michelle Steel (R-CA) and Susie Lee (D-NV) would amend the Energy Policy Act of 2005 to include geothermal as a categorical exclusion under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA). This exclusion currently applies only to oil and gas exploration and development, the bill would extend this provision to geothermal wells.

Geothermal power

Geothermal power has the potential to be a large source of clean power. Currently, geothermal power is equal to 0.4% of total U.S. utility-scale electricity generation. However, according to the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), the continental U.S. is capable of generating 100 GW of geothermal energy, enough to supply 10% of the U.S. energy needs.

Geothermal power plants emit about 99% less CO₂ than fossil fuel power plants with similar power outputs. Additionally, geothermal is a highly reliable baseload energy source capable of generating power 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, independent of weather conditions.

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H.R. 6474 provides categorical exclusions from NEPA reviews for geothermal drilling on public lands where drilling has occurred within the last five years, or where an approved environmental evaluation was completed within the last five years, or drilling will occur within an area for which an approved environmental document that considered drilling was completed pursuant to NEPA within the last 5 years. This mirrors existing categorical exclusion under the NEPA for oil and gas wells.

Status

H.R. 6474 was reported out of the House Natural Resources committee on 1/17/24.