

Union Calendar No. 574

119TH CONGRESS
2^D SESSION

H. R. 5631

[Report No. 119–660]

To appoint a Geothermal Ombudsman and establish a Geothermal Permitting Task Force from within the Bureau of Land Management, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SEPTEMBER 30, 2025

Mr. HURD of Colorado introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Natural Resources

MAY 20, 2026

Additional sponsors: Ms. LEE of Nevada, Ms. MALOY, Mr. KENNEDY of Utah, Ms. ANSARI, and Ms. OCASIO-CORTEZ

MAY 20, 2026

Reported with an amendment, committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union, and ordered to be printed

[Strike out all after the enacting clause and insert the part printed in italic]

[For text of introduced bill, see copy of bill as introduced on September 30, 2025]

A BILL

To appoint a Geothermal Ombudsman and establish a Geothermal Permitting Task Force from within the Bureau of Land Management, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
 2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 *This Act may be cited as the “Geothermal Ombudsman*
 5 *for National Deployment and Optimal Reviews Act”.*

6 **SEC. 2. GEOTHERMAL OMBUDSMAN AND PERMITTING TASK**
 7 **FORCE.**

8 (a) *DEFINITIONS.—In this section:*

9 (1) *GEOTHERMAL AUTHORIZATION.—The term*
 10 *“geothermal authorization” means any license, per-*
 11 *mit, approval, finding, determination, or other ad-*
 12 *ministrative decision issued by the Bureau of Land*
 13 *Management and any interagency consultation that*
 14 *is required or authorized under Federal law in order*
 15 *to site, construct, reconstruct, or commence operations*
 16 *of a geothermal energy project administered by the*
 17 *Bureau of Land Management.*

18 (2) *GEOTHERMAL ENERGY PROJECT.—The term*
 19 *“geothermal energy project” means a project wholly*
 20 *or partially located on public land that uses geo-*
 21 *thermal energy to generate heat or electricity.*

22 (3) *PUBLIC LAND.—The term “public land”*
 23 *means lands subject to geothermal leasing under sec-*
 24 *tion 3 of the Geothermal Steam Act of 1970 (30*
 25 *U.S.C. 1002).*

1 (4) *SECRETARY.*—*The term “Secretary” means*
2 *the Secretary of the Interior.*

3 (5) *TASK FORCE.*—*The term “Task Force”*
4 *means the Geothermal Permitting Task Force estab-*
5 *lished under subsection (c).*

6 (b) *GEOTHERMAL OMBUDSMAN.*—

7 (1) *IN GENERAL.*—*Not later than 60 days after*
8 *the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall*
9 *appoint from within the Bureau of Land Manage-*
10 *ment a Geothermal Ombudsman.*

11 (2) *DUTIES.*—*The Geothermal Ombudsman ap-*
12 *pointed under paragraph (1) shall—*

13 (A) *act as a liaison between—*

14 (i) *the individual field, district, and*
15 *State offices of the Bureau of Land Manage-*
16 *ment;*

17 (ii) *the Division Chief of the National*
18 *Renewable Energy Coordination Office of*
19 *the Bureau of Land Management; and*

20 (iii) *the Director of the Bureau of*
21 *Land Management;*

22 (B) *provide dispute resolution services be-*
23 *tween the individual field, district, and State of-*
24 *fices of the Bureau of Land Management and*
25 *applicants for geothermal authorizations;*

1 (C) monitor and facilitate permit proc-
2 essing practices and timelines across individual
3 field offices of the Bureau of Land Management;

4 (D) develop best practices for the permitting
5 and leasing process for geothermal resources; and

6 (E) coordinate with the Federal Permitting
7 Improvement Steering Council.

8 (c) *GEOHERMAL PERMITTING TASK FORCE*.—

9 (1) *ESTABLISHMENT*.—Not later than 60 days
10 after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary
11 shall establish within the Bureau of Land Manage-
12 ment a Geothermal Permitting Task Force.

13 (2) *LEADERSHIP*.—The Task Force shall be
14 headed by the Geothermal Ombudsman appointed
15 under subsection (b).

16 (3) *PERMITTING SUPPORT*.—The Task Force
17 shall support the duties of the Geothermal Ombuds-
18 man appointed under subsection (b).

19 (4) *CROSS-OFFICE PERSONNEL ASSIGNMENTS*.—

20 (A) *IN GENERAL*.—In their capacity as
21 head of the Task Force, the Geothermal Ombuds-
22 man may coordinate with any Departmental bu-
23 reau or office to assign personnel with relevant
24 expertise to assist with completion of geothermal
25 authorizations in field, district, or State offices

1 *other than the official duty station where such*
2 *personnel are located if—*

3 *(i) the Departmental bureau or office*
4 *determines that such assignment will not*
5 *materially delay ongoing completion of au-*
6 *thorizations within the office where the em-*
7 *ployee is located; and*

8 *(ii) approval is received from the head*
9 *of the official duty station where the as-*
10 *signed employee is located.*

11 *(B) ASSIGNED PERSONNEL REQUIRE-*
12 *MENTS.—Department personnel assigned to as-*
13 *sist with completion of geothermal authorizations*
14 *under subparagraph (A) shall—*

15 *(i) work in-person full-time at an offi-*
16 *cial Department office;*

17 *(ii) if necessary as determined by the*
18 *Geothermal Ombudsman, travel to the Bu-*
19 *reau of Land Management field, district, or*
20 *State office with jurisdiction over the geo-*
21 *thermal authorization to which the em-*
22 *ployee has been assigned by the Geothermal*
23 *Ombudsman;*

24 *(iii) participate as part of the team of*
25 *personnel working on geothermal authoriza-*

1 *tions to which the employee has been as-*
2 *signed by the Geothermal Ombudsman; and*

3 *(iv) regularly report to the head of the*
4 *field, district, or State office of the Bureau*
5 *of Land Management with jurisdiction over*
6 *geothermal authorizations to which the em-*
7 *ployee has been assigned by the Geothermal*
8 *Ombudsman.*

9 *(C) RETENTION ALLOWANCES.—*

10 *(i) IN GENERAL.—Subject to the avail-*
11 *ability of appropriations, the Geothermal*
12 *Ombudsman may pay a retention allowance*
13 *to an employee assigned to assist with the*
14 *completion of geothermal authorizations*
15 *under subparagraph (A). Retention allow-*
16 *ances—*

17 *(I) shall be stated as the percent-*
18 *age of the rate of basic pay of an em-*
19 *ployee, and may not exceed 25 percent*
20 *of such rate of basic pay;*

21 *(II) may not be considered to be*
22 *part of the basic pay of an employee,*
23 *and the reduction or elimination of a*
24 *retention allowance may not be ap-*
25 *pealed; and*

1 (III) shall be paid at the same
2 time and in the same manner as the
3 employee's basic pay is paid.

4 (ii) *CONSIDERATIONS.*—In exercising
5 the retention allowance authority described
6 in clause (i), the Geothermal Ombudsman
7 shall consider—

8 (I) an employee's specialized ex-
9 pertise related to geothermal authoriza-
10 tions;

11 (II) the demonstrated need to re-
12 tain an employee to meet the perform-
13 ance improvement objectives for geo-
14 thermal authorization timelines and
15 develop best practices for completion of
16 geothermal authorizations; and

17 (III) the difficulty in recruiting
18 or replacing qualified personnel with
19 relevant expertise related to geothermal
20 authorizations.

21 (D) *SAVINGS CLAUSE.*—Cross-office per-
22 sonnel assignments carried out under this para-
23 graph shall not alter the underlying jurisdiction
24 of other offices of the Bureau of Land Manage-
25 ment over applicable geothermal authorizations.

1 (d) *REPORT.*—*The Geothermal Ombudsman shall sub-*
2 *mit to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources of*
3 *the Senate and the Committee on Natural Resources of the*
4 *House of Representatives an annual report that describes*
5 *the activities of the Task Force and evaluates the effective-*
6 *ness of geothermal permit processing during the preceding*
7 *1-year period.*

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