

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 11, 2022

President Joseph R. Biden  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden:

We appreciate your issuance of Executive Order 14017 and the associated 100-day review that recognizes America's ongoing supply chain crisis. We are committed to maintaining and strengthening our nation's leadership and rebuilding our productive capacity in key sectors and value-chains. To do so, however, we must address our most vulnerable positions, and in no place are our supply chains more vulnerable than our lack of home-grown production and processing of rare earth and critical minerals.

The United States relies almost exclusively on foreign nations – many of them unfriendly and with nonexistent labor and environmental standards – to meet much of our present mineral demand. As reported by the U.S. Geological Survey, the United States imported more than 50 percent of its supply of at least 47 minerals commodities in 2021, including 100 percent of its supply of 17 of them.

The concentration of where that supply comes from makes our foreign dependence even more concerning. China dominates the international critical mineral supply chain, presenting a dire national security threat for the United States, and harsh economic realities for American manufacturers. With demand for certain minerals expected to grow by up to 3,000 percent over the next two decades, our reliance on China and other, often adversarial, nations to satisfy this demand will only grow.

Congress has acted to provide substantial new authorities and federal assistance to boost domestic mineral supplies, which we are counting on your administration to fully implement and wisely award. Yet, given the severity of this challenge, we do not believe those steps, on their own, will be sufficient. In order to address the threats to our national security, we respectfully request that you invoke the Defense Production Act (DPA) to accelerate domestic production of lithium-ion battery materials, in particular graphite, manganese, cobalt, nickel, and lithium.

China not only leads the world in manufacture of lithium-ion batteries, but also in the processing of the minerals and raw materials required in lithium-ion battery manufacturing. The United States' import-reliance on graphite and manganese, essential to the lithium-ion batteries required for commercial technology sectors like electric vehicles and energy storage systems, is also a hindrance for major weapons platforms and defense capabilities, from UAVs and space defense systems to our warfighters in the field.

Our dependence on foreign-sourced cobalt and lithium is elevated as the processing of both is dominated by China. China is clearly willing to utilize any means at hand – such as exploiting its workforce through harsh labor conditions, using mining processes outside of international practice, espionage, and IP theft – to establish technological dominance over the United States.

Allowing our foreign mineral dependence to persist is a growing threat to U.S. national security, and we need to take every step to address it. The 100-day report acknowledges the “powerful tool” the DPA has been to expand production of supplies needed to combat COVID-19, as well as the potential the DPA could have to “support investment in other critical sectors and enable industry and government to collaborate more effectively.” The time is now to grow, support, and encourage investment in the domestic production of graphite, manganese, cobalt, lithium, nickel, and other critical minerals to ensure we support our national security, and to fulfill our need for lithium-ion batteries – both for consumers and for the Department of Defense.

We stand prepared to work with you in a bipartisan manner to take on this emerging crisis. The authorities provided to you as President under the Defense Production Act will help to ensure that America’s critical mineral supply chains are strong, responsibly produced, and ethically sourced. Given the stakes, America cannot afford to wait any longer for that day to arrive.

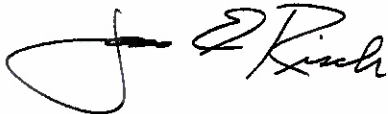
Sincerely,



Lisa Murkowski  
United States Senator



Joe Manchin III  
United States Senator



James E. Risch  
United States Senator



Bill Cassidy, M.D.  
United States Senator