

Helium Extraction Act of 2017

“The looming helium crisis must be dealt with now. Without this bill, we could become dangerously dependent on unstable foreign countries for our supply of helium. This bill encourages the development of American sources of helium and will boost both our national security and economy,” Rep. Paul Cook (R-CA)

BILL SUMMARY

H.R. 3279, the “Helium Extraction Act of 2017,” introduced by Rep. Paul Cook (R-CA), amends the Mineral Leasing Act to authorize the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to lease federal land for the purpose of helium production under the same lease terms used for oil and gas development.

BACKGROUND

Helium, which is a byproduct of the natural gas extraction process, is an essential element used in medical, defense and energy related services such as MRIs, air-to-air missile guidance systems and semiconductors. The United States is currently the world’s largest supplier of helium - accounting for nearly one-third of global supply - ahead of Qatar, Algeria and Russia. As the single largest producer of helium in the world, uncertainty in the American market in tandem with the recent turmoil in the Middle East region, including Qatar’s political crisis, has far-reaching impacts on global supply. H.R. 3279 works to alleviate potential future supply concerns by facilitating the domestic production of helium on federal lands, while providing a fair return to the taxpayer. In addition to strengthening national security, expanded domestic helium exploration and production will benefit communities through economic activity and job creation.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources held a legislative hearing on a discussion draft of the bill on June 21, 2017. Rep. Cook introduced H.R. 3279 on July 18, 2017 and it passed Committee on July 26, 2017.