Battery and Critical Mineral Recycling Act of 2021

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Background: In the last few years, the Energy and Natural Resources Committee has held a number of hearings to discuss the need for critical minerals in the United States. According to DOE, of the 35 minerals critical for U.S. economic and national security identified by the Department of the Interior, the U.S. has no domestic production of 14 and relies on imports for more than 50 percent of 31 minerals. At the same time, demand and global markets are growing for clean energy technologies like wind, solar, hydrogen, and electricity systems that require significant material resources.

Energy storage and electric vehicles in particular will require a growing source of lithium, cobalt, nickel, and graphite, all of which are majority produced in China. State-sponsored Chinese firms have expanded their energy and resource investment throughout the world and have clearly made maintaining their mineral superiority a major goal of their government. Implementing policies to create a circular economy for batteries and critical minerals through strengthened battery recycling and reuse programs is a vital action we must take to reduce domestic reliance on imported materials.

Bill Text: This bill aims to address the lack of domestic policy, markets, and infrastructure regarding the coordinated collection, recycling and reuse of single use and rechargeable consumer batteries which contain valuable materials needed to support a U.S.-based supply chain that would contribute to a secure and ethically sourced stream of critical minerals to help meet our growing needs. This bill targets many batteries (AA, AAA, etc.) and e-waste products containing batteries (cellphones, laptops, power tools, cameras, etc.) that can be found around the typical U.S. home, however it does not address vehicle batteries. Bill provisions include:

Grant Programs

- **RD&D** grants to support innovative approaches to increase the reuse and recycling of batteries by addressing recycling processes; battery design that facilitates the dismantling, reuse, and recovery of battery components and materials; strategies to increase participation in battery recycling; the integration of increased quantities of recycled materials in batteries; improved safety during disposal, collection, and reprocessing of batteries; mitigation of environmental impacts; protection of data privacy associated with collected battery containing products; optimization of the value of material derived from recycled batteries; and cost effectiveness of the reuse and recycling of batteries.
- **Federal matching funds** for state and local government programs for the establishment or enhancement of state battery collection, recycling, and reprocessing programs.
- Grants to support the establishment of **retail collection points** to increase the acceptance and collection of used batteries for reuse, recycling, or proper disposal.

Lithium-Ion Battery Recycling Prize Competition

- Reauthorizes and increases funding for DOE's existing Lithium-Ion Battery Recycling Prize competition. Provides additional funding for pilot projects.

Best Practices

- The Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency shall develop best practices for the collection of batteries in coordination with state and local leaders and relevant private sectors that may be technically and economically feasible by States and local governments, are environmentally sound for waste management workers, and optimize the value and use of material derived from the recycling of batteries.

Voluntary Labeling Program

- Would establish voluntary labeling guidelines and other forms of voluntary communication about the reuse and recycling of batteries to help identify collection points, promote consumer education on battery collection and recycling, and to reduce safety concerns relating to the improver disposal of batteries.

Task Force on Producer Requirements

- The Secretary of Energy shall convene a task force to develop a model extended battery producer responsibility framework that suggests regulatory pathways for effective recycling and life-cycle management of battery materials.