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December 3, 2025

The Honorable Pete Hegseth
Secretary of War
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301-1000

Dear Secretary:

I am writing on behalf of the Montana Legislature's Environmental Quality Council to request your support of federal funding to recover and develop critical minerals and rare earth elements in Montana. Our state has exceptional mineral resources, available technologies, and a ready workforce to make this happen.

Specifically, we ask that you authorize and appropriate sufficient funding to the Army Research, Development, Test and Evaluation account to include the Rare Earth and Critical Minerals Extraction Demonstration project of the Montana Mining Association. The projects, which include the Anaconda, Antonioli, Berkeley Pit, Black Butte Copper, and Sibanye Stillwater sites, is a first phase. Future phases could include other legacy sites.

As you know, critical minerals are vital components in numerous modern technologies. Montana's unique geology includes many elements identified as critical minerals, such as antimony, copper, manganese, platinum, and zinc. Other deposits contain neodymium and praseodymium for fighter jets, drones, and missile systems, and gallium for semiconductors and next-generation defense platforms.

By funding this project, Congress can stimulate economic growth, create new jobs, and enhance our national security. The project also aligns with the Department of War's Golden Dome initiative and broader efforts to promote domestic resource development and strengthen America's position in the global marketplace. The United States' overreliance on foreign sources of critical minerals currently poses economic and national security risks.

We hope you'll ensure the next federal budget includes funding for the Rare Earth and Critical Minerals Extraction Demonstration project. Please also note that uncommitted funds for other shovel-ready, critical minerals projects remain unspent from the previous budget year.

Thank you for considering our request—and for your dedication to your work.

Sincerely,

Rep. Paul C. Fielder, presiding officer

Environmental Quality Council

This letter was approved by a 14-1 vote of the Environmental Quality Council