

Better Infrastructure Needs a Better Permitting Process

The need to build new infrastructure—especially energy infrastructure—is greater than ever. However, the byzantine federal permitting process is neither predictable, nor transparent, inhibits capital investment, and delays needed projects.

As part of its EnergyInnovates series the Chamber’s Global Energy Institute hosted a [virtual event](#) today where policy makers in Congress and the Biden administration discussed what can be done to improve the process for permitting infrastructure projects.

Why it matters: Many areas in the U.S. are already missing out on the full benefits of our energy revolution because it has been difficult to permit and build or replace energy infrastructure. Last year, President Trump finalized new rules to modernize the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to speed up the review process, but those improvements are now being reviewed by the Biden administration and could be repealed.

Key takeaways:

- **New energy infrastructure needs to be built.** “If we’re going to electrify our electrical fleet we are going to have to triple or quadruple the amount of electricity produced today,” Rep. Garret Graves (R-LA) said. “It means we have to have ways to transmit it.”
- **Problems with the permitting process.** “Any time that it takes for more engineering, more studies, more reviews, it’s taking away the precious tax dollars that we could put towards actual construction,” said Rep. Rodney Davis (R-IL).
- **Permitting process updates will help meet policy goals.** It takes four years to permit wind and solar, and seven years for transmission projects. It creates “a lot of uncertainty and unpredictability...that’s not only holding back investment” but also “our ability to meet these deep emission reductions,” said Heather Zichal, CEO of the Clean Power Association.
- **The White House wants to help.** President Biden ordered his administration to “evaluate citing and permitting processes” and “identify steps that can be taken to accelerate the deployment of clean energy and transmission projects

in an environmentally sustainable manner,” said David Hayes, Special Assistant to the President for Climate Policy.

He added that approving electric transmission lines at the state level has been a “major stumbling block”. He thinks “this is an area where it will require a new effort to integrate state and federal permitting reviews,” and “we’re committed to doing it.”

- **Protecting the environment remains a priority.** Improving the permitting and approval process will not short circuit environmental protection. “By doing a better job focusing on that purpose you can get better environmental outcomes and better project delivery,” Rep. Graves said.
- **Focusing on outcomes.** “At the end of the day, it’s all about getting to the completed project faster and more efficiently,” said Rep. Graves.

ICYMI: This week, GEI President Marty Durbin talked with [Sen. Shelley Moore Capito \(R-WV\)](#) about including permitting process reform as part of an infrastructure bill. “We have this duplicative, lengthy, costly [permitting] process,” she said. “It’s costs money, time, and jobs.”

Dig deeper:

- Visit the Global Energy Institute’s webpage on [Infrastructure and Permitting](#)
- Tell Congress to pass a comprehensive infrastructure bill by the [Fourth of July](#).
- Register for upcoming events in the EnergyInnovates series [here](#).