



Coffman unveils new House caucus

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Rep. Mike Coffman (R-Colo.) yesterday announced the creation of a new congressional caucus to focus on the domestic supply of rare earth elements and growing downstream industries.

Coffman's move is in response to a new group called The Association for Rare Earth, also known as RARE, which sent lawmakers a letter in October urging them to create caucuses on the issue (Greenwire, Oct. 26).

"We are very pleased that RARE's call for the creation of a Congressional Rare Earth Caucus was answered so quickly," group president Adam Falkoff said in a statement. "Developing a political consensus about how to secure a sustainable supply of REEs will have significant impact on thousands of companies and millions of American jobs."

Former Rep. Tom McMillen (D-Md.), an adviser for RARE, also praised the creation of a caucus.

Reps. Roscoe Bartlett (R-Md.) and Hank Johnson (D-Ga.) are early members. Falkoff said in an interview that several others have expressed strong interest in joining the group once it was formed. In the Senate, the issue may become part of one of the chamber's broader existing groups.

Chinese export controls of the 17 elements -- many of which are critical to manufacturing cars, smartphones and other technologies -- sparked a global frenzy to find new sources and restarted U.S. mining efforts. The caucus, Coffman hopes, will help set policies to boost related industries, like magnet manufacturing, that have proliferated overseas.

"With the establishment of this caucus, I am confident we will be able to build awareness on Capitol Hill about the critical threat China's trade policies of restricting rare earth exports pose to both the economic and national security of the United States," Coffman said. "We cannot afford inaction on this issue any longer." Coffman has been an early advocate of the domestic rare earths industry. He has helped push Department of Defense officials to look closer at U.S. dependence on the elements for national security. He also contributed to legislation passed in the House Natural Resources Committee earlier this year. Similar efforts are pending in the Senate (E&ENews PM, Nov. 2).