

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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Representative Dan Saddler

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Sponsor Statement

House Bill 177

“An Act relating to critical and essential minerals and the global energy transition.”

Critical and essential minerals comprise a wide range of elements, including lithium, copper, tin, gold, uranium, platinum, palladium, cobalt, graphite, nickel, silver, zinc, manganese, molybdenum, and chromium. These minerals are fundamental components of many of today’s ubiquitous technologies, such as computers and household appliances. To keep our economy and our day-to-day lives moving forward, we need to ensure we have a plan for accessing these critical resources.

Demand for critical and essential minerals has increased in recent years – and is likely to continue to increase, possibly exponentially – as the demand for renewable energy sources grows. Critical and essential minerals are a key element of many emerging energy technologies, ranging from electric vehicles to solar panels.

What’s more, critical and essential minerals are also increasingly essential components of the high-technology industrial processes and weapons systems that play increasingly important roles in maintaining a strong national defense.

Currently, China is home to most of the global market for processing and refining critical minerals, which has concerning implications for the health of our nation’s economy, and the strength of our nation’s armed services and defense capabilities. It is vitally important that our nation be able to reliably produce such minerals and use them to manufacture technology-forward products and systems.

HB 177 helps meet that imperative. It directs the Alaska government to assess the state’s potential as an alternative source of these minerals, identify strategies to attract industry investment, and review the possible impacts of potential regulatory regimes. This proposal has the potential to not only decrease our reliance on imported critical minerals, but also increase investment in Alaska’s natural resource industry.

Alaska has an opportunity to position itself as a competitive source of critical and essential minerals in the global supply chain. HB 177 requires the Departments of Natural Resources and Commerce, Community, and Economic Development to provide the information that industry experts and state officials need to take the next steps toward making Alaska a globally competitive source of critical and essential minerals.