TESTIMONY - JONATHAN EVANS, LITHIUM AMERICAS

House Select Committee on the CCP Hearing
Washington, D.C. on November 19, 2025
10:00 A.M. | 390 Cannon House Office Building.

INTRODUCTION

Thank you Chairman Moolenaar, Ranking Member Krishnamoorthi, and members of the committee for having me here today. I appreciate your focus on highlighting the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) domination and market manipulation when it comes to critical minerals.

Lithium Americas is proud to be part of the conversation and the solution. My name is Jonathan Evans, and I am the President and Chief Executive Officer of Lithium Americas. We are developing the critical Thacker Pass Project, a fully integrated mining and processing operation located in Humboldt County in northern Nevada, which hosts the largest known measured lithium resource and reserve in the world.

Thacker Pass is owned by a joint venture between Lithium Americas and General Motors. Our immediate focus is advancing Phase 1 of the project toward production, targeting nominal design capacity of 40,000 tonnes per year of battery-quality lithium carbonate. Once online, Phase 1 will increase U.S. lithium production tenfold and could meet roughly 20% of today's U.S. processed lithium demand.

We are grateful for the U.S. Department of Energy's $2.23 billion loan[1], which will help finance the construction of the processing facilities at Thacker Pass. Together with our partners and the Administration, we are strengthening America's supply chain, creating high-quality jobs, and bolstering our long-term energy security and prosperity.

STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF DOMESTIC LITHIUM

Onshoring large-scale U.S. lithium production is not optional. Lithium is a critical element of national security, powering a vast array of defense technologies that sustain both resilient military operations and essential civilian infrastructure.

Beyond its strategic importance, lithium represents a powerful driver of economic growth and energy independence, creating American jobs, strengthening domestic industries, and bolstering long-term energy resilience.

[1] Lithium Americas, "Lithium Americas Receives First Drawdown of $435 Million from U.S. DOE ATVM Loan," October 20, 2025

Yet, the United States remains dangerously dependent on foreign countries, including China, for this critical mineral. The U.S. currently produces less than 1% percent of the global supply of lithium.

This is not merely an economic vulnerability; it poses a direct threat to national security.

China, recognizing lithium's strategic value, has aggressively moved to dominate the global supply chain, from mining and refining to battery manufacturing. Chinese companies now control roughly 70% of global lithium chemical processing capacity[2], using scale, state-backed subsidies, and predatory pricing to suppress competition and cement their market dominance.

CCP MANIPULATION

While the U.S. played a critical role in developing the Lithium-ion battery in the 1980's,[3] China has since built the infrastructure and industrial base needed to dominate the global market—and shows no intention of relinquishing that control.

The CCP views dominance over critical minerals as a matter of geopolitical strategy. Through a coordinated, decades-long effort, China has systematically secured control over key mineral supply chains to shape global markets in its favor.

China now leads the global lithium industry, not only in mining and processing raw materials, but also in manufacturing critical components such as battery cathodes, electrolytes, and the batteries themselves. The CCP actively supports its domestic companies in acquiring foreign assets, offering them low- or no-interest loans and political backing to secure supply chains abroad. This pattern is evident across regions including Africa, Australia, and Latin America[4].

To maintain its dominance, China has depressed global lithium prices to discourage investment by non-Chinese firms and deter public or private capital from entering the market. Despite soaring demand and double-digit annual growth in lithium applications, this price manipulation has constrained the development of independent, transparent supply chains.

Efforts by Western entities to establish transparent, market-based price indexes have been undermined or displaced by Chinese-controlled platforms such as the Shanghai Metals Market (SMM) and the London Metal Exchange (LME), both now heavily influenced by Chinese pricing data. As a result, global financial institutions rely on distorted benchmarks, limiting Western firms' ability to secure financing and expand non-Chinese lithium supply chains.

Additionally, Chinese companies often design their offshore operations to produce lithium intermediates that are intentionally unsuitable for direct use in high-tech applications. These materials are then shipped to China for further processing—where the country controls roughly

[2] U.S. EIA, "China dominates global trade of battery minerals," May 21, 2025

[3] U.S. DOE, "Charging Up the Development of Lithium-Ion Batteries," October 15, 2019

[4] Supply Chain Digital, "Why BYD has Bet Big on Brazil for Lithium Supply," February 17, 2025

70% of global refining capacity. This strategy consolidates control over both supply and demand, reinforcing China's dominance not only in lithium but across the broader battery and energy storage industries.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

We cannot let the CCP continue to dominate critical minerals. We are thankful that President Trump, his Administration and Congress are focused on this and that the U.S. government is partnering with companies like Lithium Americas to ensure a strategic global supply chain of lithium.

Thacker Pass is the only fully permitted, under construction lithium production project on U.S. soil. The project will put the U.S. on the path to self-sufficiency, but it's just a start. We must keep advancing lithium projects so the United States is no longer dependent on foreign sources for this essential mineral.

But developing projects like Thacker Pass is highly risky. The upfront costs for exploration, permitting, appeals, and community engagement are high, and the timelines are long and uncertain, which deter private investment. Targeted federal support, including streamlined and predictable permitting, timely resolution of appeals, and tools to de-risk early stages, can help ensure these projects succeed.

Permitting Reform

The U.S. cannot compete globally unless important national projects can be built in a timely manner. The formal permitting and subsequent appeals processes for Thacker Pass took nearly five years. We were actually considered "fast tracked," given the process typically takes 7-10 years in the U.S., which is among the longest in the world. Such lengthy, unpredictable, and litigation-prone processes discourage private capital from investing domestically.

De-Risking Projects

The federal government must continue to explore finance support via low-cost loans and other structured financial instruments to help fund projects and attract private capital to co-invest. The Chinese government has used this model for many years, as do our allies, including Japan and Korea.

We also need to establish programs and tools that deliver true price transparency. China has steered lithium pricing benchmarks and the global narrative, successfully discouraging public markets from backing non-China supply chains. Public capital markets are dissuaded from financing and supporting non-China backed supply chains given the global narrative has been hijacked by China and its pricing models.

The same pattern appears in other critical minerals, including rare earths. Despite "weak" headline prices, China continues acquiring overseas lithium and other key resources—often at discounted valuations—reinforcing its market power.

The U.S. can level the playing field by supporting a temporary minimum market price tied to validated, market-based production costs. Today, China is running high-cost domestic capacity below cost—backstopped by subsidies—to flood the market and depress prices. In November, the CEO of China's CATL's admitted to this - telling Reuters that they were now stopping production at their mine as they had "achieved their goal of lowering lithium prices."[5]

China's lower-quality lithium resources are not competitive with higher-grade deposits elsewhere; if they were, they would have been fully utilized years ago. Coordinated actions by CATL, BYD, and state policy pushed prices to unsustainably low levels—discouraging new non-Chinese entrants, expanding China's battery market share, and depressing asset values to facilitate overseas acquisitions. Domestic and allied producers need global price transparency and targeted safeguards so competitive, non-Chinese operations can be developed.

CONCLUSION

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak to you today. Securing America's lithium supply is about far more than resource development. It's about safeguarding the nation's economic future, technological leadership, and national security.

The United States pioneered lithium-ion battery technology, yet now risks ceding control of the next great energy revolution to China. By investing in domestic mining, refining, and battery manufacturing, the U.S. can reduce strategic vulnerabilities, safeguard national security and create high-quality American jobs. Strengthening the domestic lithium supply chain is not just prudent policy, it is an urgent national imperative.

[5] Asia Financial, "China's CATL Feels the Pinch of a Lithium Price Slump it Created," January 22, 2025