

**Chairman Peters Opening Statement As Prepared for Delivery**  
**Full Committee Hearing: Permitting Council**  
**July 10, 2024**

Over the past three years, the Biden Administration and Congress have worked together to make once in a generation upgrades to our infrastructure. The investments made through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, the CHIPS and Science Act, and the Inflation Reduction Act have already launched thousands of essential projects across the country.

Before projects like these get off the ground, they need to obtain critical approvals. This process helps to ensure that improving our infrastructure doesn't come at a cost for our environment, wildlife, public land, and private property.

These approvals are generally referred to as "permitting." And today's hearing gives us a chance to dive more deeply into how that process works. These landmark new investments give us the chance to do something essential: think critically about how we execute infrastructure projects and how we can improve transparency, coordination, and accountability in permitting. Today, we can take one important step in that work by taking a closer look at the work of the Permitting Council.

The Permitting Council was established almost a decade ago to oversee the process by which government agencies issue permits on our most expensive projects. It coordinates all environmental reviews and authorizations for a wide array of projects – including renewable energy, electricity transmission, ports and waterways, and broadband.

The Permitting Council improves this process in a few key ways. It gives stakeholders more transparency by publishing approvals and timetables online. It designates a single federal agency that coordinates the permitting process for each project and reduces the burden on project sponsors, including state and Tribal governments, and private companies. The Permitting Council also serves as a "federal permitting center of excellence," where it makes recommendations to agencies on best practices to improve the permitting process.

In other words – the Council helps ensure that these investments can deliver on their promises – to improve our nation's infrastructure, create jobs, and transition to a clean energy future.

Today, we'll have the chance to hear directly from Eric Beightel – the council's Executive Director – about what Congress can do to support this work. His testimony comes at a crucial moment, as the Permitting Council goes through some big changes.

In 2022, the Permitting Council received \$350 million in the Inflation Reduction Act to transfer to other agencies and governments to improve permitting. These resources will help hire subject matter experts, invest in engagement from stakeholders, and purchase technologies that are used in environmental reviews.

The Council also recently established the Tribal Assistance Program to earmark a portion of funds. These resources are intended to help overcome the barriers Tribes often face in engaging in the environmental review process. The Permitting Council has made two transfers for Tribal assistance so far.

This hearing is an essential opportunity to better understand how these funds will be used – how the permitting process can continue to improve – and how Congress should consider strengthening the Council’s purview in the future.