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## Geothermal Innovation Act

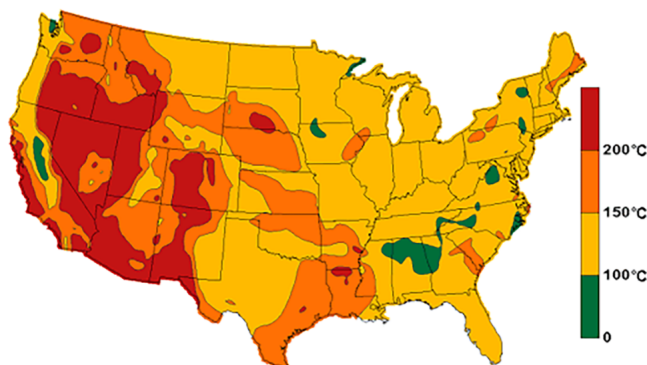
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### Overview:

The Energy Policy Act of 2005 was enacted in part to promote and expedite oil and natural gas development. Section 390 of the Energy Policy Act establishes statutory authority for the use of "categorical exclusions" (CXs) from further analysis under NEPA for five types of oil and gas development activities. The purpose of Section 390 CXs is to streamline approval of exploration and development of oil and gas on BLM public lands and U.S. Forest Service lands, by allowing designated actions to proceed without further environmental analysis.

In an earlier draft of the Energy Policy Act of 2005, these same categorical exclusions were included for geothermal but did not make it into the final Act. These categorical exclusions have not been created by any regulatory authority through a rule-making process.<sup>1</sup> Many in the oil industry cite these categorical exclusions as a critical component in expanding US oil and gas extraction and a contributing factor to the recent technological developments that have increased extraction efficiency. If the same privilege were extended to geothermal, we may see similar results.

Geothermal resources of the United States



Source: U.S. Department of Energy, Office of Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy (public domain)

The United States has significant geothermal resources, particularly in the West. For example, it is estimated that the current natural heat flux out of the Yellowstone Magma chamber is between 4.5 and 6 GW. To put this into perspective, 3.125 million photovoltaic panels will produce 1 GW. The generation capacity of 412 utility scale wind turbines is approximately 1 GW.

### Bill Specifics

- This bill would create a categorical exclusion for the conversion of an oil or gas well to a geothermal well.
- It would also extend a series of categorical exclusions to geothermal extractors previously only offered to oil and gas activities.

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<sup>1</sup> It appears that the only CXs that oil, gas, and geothermal currently share relate to issuance of future interest leases, approval of mineral leases, approval of a variety of agreements, approval of suspension of operations, approval of royalty determinations and approvals of Notices of Intent to conduct exploration.

[https://www.doi.gov/sites/doi.gov/files/elips/documents/516-dm-11\\_0.pdf](https://www.doi.gov/sites/doi.gov/files/elips/documents/516-dm-11_0.pdf)

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