

Securing Energy Affordability Through American Energy Competitiveness

2026 Energy Policy Roadmap

The development of affordable and reliable energy is foundational to America's prosperity and security. In 2025, consequential administrative and legislative actions charted a path to secure American energy dominance by reinforcing the strategic role of domestic oil and natural gas production. Federal policymakers have an opportunity to build on this momentum by advancing an agenda that lowers energy costs for Americans and supports local job creation. Federal reforms that streamline approvals, reduce idle capital, and restore regulatory predictability can lower production costs, catalyze investment, and deliver more affordable energy to American consumers.

The AXPC's 2026 Energy Policy Roadmap offers Congress and the Trump Administration practical solutions to support energy affordability, strengthen U.S. competitiveness, and enable responsible domestic oil and natural gas development.

POLICY PRIORITIES

Promote Global Competitiveness of U.S. Oil and Natural Gas

U.S. oil and natural gas producers operate in the global marketplace and at a scale that stabilizes markets and moderates price volatility. Policymakers should continue to provide clear signals that responsible, lower-emitting U.S. oil and natural gas production and exports serve the national interest, keep energy costs low, reduce the trade deficit, and reinforce America's role as a reliable global supplier. Trade, investment, and regulations should align with energy affordability, reliability, and security objectives, while avoiding approaches that shift production overseas and weaken U.S. competitiveness.

Prioritize Meaningful Permitting Reform to Reduce Delay and Lower Costs

Outdated permitting processes and endless litigation drive up energy costs by idling projects, stalling infrastructure, disrupting supply chains, and increasing expenses—often without proportional benefits. Energy and infrastructure developers need predictability and efficiency throughout project lifecycles—clear standards, timely decisions, and durable approvals that avoid open-ended delays or shifting requirements. A permitting system that delivers decisions with reliable outcomes lowers risk and capital costs, and ultimately energy prices for consumers.

Improve Regulatory Frameworks to Support Greater Efficiency, Workability, and Durability

America's independent producers need clear, stable regulatory frameworks to plan their business without facing retroactive rule changes or shifting policies. Regulatory volatility discourages investment and raises capital costs, even when energy demand is strong. Agencies should continue efforts to ground regulations firmly in statutory authority, ensure requirements are implementable in real-world operating conditions, and avoid unnecessary rulemaking cycles that perpetuate uncertainty.

Unlock America's Federal Energy Resources

Federal leasing and development of taxpayer-owned resources generate significant public revenue, support high-paying jobs, and strengthen energy security, but today's production depends on yesterday's leasing. Continued focus on ensuring consistent and predictable access to federal resources makes these investment opportunities more competitive, unlocking these benefits and ultimately supporting greater energy affordability for Americans.

Build Smarter, Faster Agency Systems and Processes

Federal systems should minimize unnecessary burden and delay that inflate production costs and slow progress, especially critical in lower price and cost-constrained environments. Agencies should focus on fit-for-purpose processes that avoid unnecessary procedural complexity while leveraging third-party expertise as well as state regulatory programs where federal programs are duplicative.

Power Grid Reliability with American Natural Gas

As natural gas plays an increasingly central role in electricity generation and domestic power demand continues to grow, adequate infrastructure capacity, storage availability, and recognition of natural gas as a foundational reliability resource are critical to maintaining grid resilience and energy affordability. In 2026, policymakers should reduce barriers to infrastructure development and support policies that appropriately value reliability.

CONGRESSIONAL PERMITTING REFORM

Modernize Federal Permitting to Streamline Processes and Improve Project Certainty

- **End Permitting Lawfare and Reform Judicial Review of NEPA:** Close remaining litigation loopholes that have allowed NEPA to be weaponized as a tool for delay rather than inform agency actions
- **Modernize NEPA's Statutory Framework:** Refocus environmental review on reasonably foreseeable significant and direct impacts within an agency's jurisdiction
- **Establish Permit Predictability for Federal Lands:** Enable state-led permitting where federal interests are limited and streamline permitting, such as through permit-by-rule approaches for federal projects with low environmental impacts
- **Provide Statutory Certainty Under the Clean Water Act:** Define the scope and timelines of Section 401 water quality certifications and codify nationwide permits under Section 404
- **Ensure Finality of Lawfully Issued Permits:** Clarify that permits may not be suspended, revoked, or reopened absent a demonstrable legal deficiency or judicial direction
- **Inject Common Sense into ESA Implementation:** Clarify statutory definitions such as habitat, define consultation triggers, streamline Sections 7 and 10 processes, and limit compensatory mitigation to clear statutory authority and proportional impacts
- **Rationalize the Natural Gas Act:** Streamline LNG export approvals by reforming Section 3 of the Natural Gas Act

PRIORITY REGULATORY ACTIONS

Workable and Effective Emissions Regulations that Deliver Environmental Progress

- **Finish Reconsiderations of the Oil and Gas Methane and VOC Rules (OOOOb/c):** Prioritize EPA's reconsideration of certain elements of the OOOOb/c methane regulations to address real-world infeasibility issues and excessive compliance burdens on mature and marginal assets while preserving meaningful emissions reductions
- **Fix Subpart W:** Continue reconsideration of the 2024 Subpart W revisions and implement targeted technical fixes that improve methane emissions reporting accuracy, flexibility, and feasibility, and take steps to ensure that future technical fixes to Subpart W remain durable if the program is paused as proposed

Federal Tax and Trade Policy to Unlock Investment

- **Leverage Global Trade Policy for U.S. Energy Dominance:** Leverage domestic energy assets in trade negotiations to reduce the trade deficit and avoid increasing costs for American energy production in any long-term tariff policies
- **Enshrine a Pro-Investment Tax Environment:** Implement OBBBA's landmark tax reforms that will accelerate capital investment in American energy production, including the immediate expensing of intangible drilling costs (IDCs) under the corporate alternative minimum tax (CAMT) and the equalization of 45Q credits for carbon sequestration across underground storage and enhanced oil recovery (EOR)

Federal Lands Management to Unleash American Energy

- **Finalize Rescission of the Conservation and Landscape Health Rule:** Completing BLM's proposed rescission would remove a clear unlawful overreach in authority that bypassed Congress to tie up federal lands from multiple uses, including responsible resource development
- **Update and Align Onshore Commingling Regulations:** In addition to revising commingling regulations to fully implement OBBBA and provide clear, predictable approval pathways, BLM should modernize the process for approving production measurement technologies and ensure flexibility for continued innovation and efficiencies
- **Streamline and Modernize Onshore APD Permitting:** Building on 2025 regulatory and judicial progress, BLM should implement streamlined pathways for drill permits (APDs) and related authorizations through categorical exclusions, permit-by-rule pathways, improved system function and transparency for BLMs Automated Fluid Minerals Support System (AFMSS), and removal of administrative bottlenecks like the pay.gov transaction limit

The American Exploration & Production Council urges policymakers to prioritize energy affordability through policies that reduce costs, restore predictability, and strengthen American energy competitiveness.