

Committee on Energy and Commerce

Opening Statement

of

Subcommittee on Energy Ranking Member Bobby Rush

DOE Modernization: The Office of Cybersecurity, Energy Security, and Emergency Response

September 27, 2018

Mr. Chairman, I want to thank you for holding this important and timely hearing and I want to welcome Assistant Secretary Evans to the Energy Subcommittee for the first time.

Mr. Chairman, the issue of cyber-security is always prevalent in the minds of Members of this Subcommittee, as well as in the minds of the American public, as we have heard of many instances of cyber-attacks and cyber probes, both domestically and abroad, over the past few years.

Mr. Chairman, as recently as April we heard from the FERC commissioners that our energy grid is constantly being attacked, almost daily, by state actors, as well as by other entities who would try to do us harm.

While we have not yet seen widespread outages due to cyber-attacks on our electric grid, it is imperative that we take proactive steps to mitigate the risk of these types of attacks, to the maximum extent possible.

It is my hope and expectation that installing Assistant Secretary Evans into her new role as head of the Office of Cybersecurity, Energy Security, and Emergency Response, or CESER, will go a long way in achieving that objective.

Mr. Chairman, as you know, I have worked with my colleague, Mr. Walberg of Michigan, on a bill to codify some of the work that DOE has already been conducting when we introduced HR 5174, the Energy Emergency Leadership Act back in March.

I want to acknowledge Mr. Walberg for his leadership on this issue and convey my appreciation to all of my colleagues from both sides of the aisle for their support of the legislation as it passed through the both Subcommittee and full Committee earlier this spring.

As you know, Mr. Chairman, HR 5174 would basically codify this new position by amending Section 203(a) of the Department of Energy Organization Act and establishing the Assistant Secretary position responsible for cybersecurity and emergency response issues.

The newly created Assistant Secretary would have jurisdiction over all energy emergency and security functions related to energy supply, infrastructure, and cybersecurity.

Mr. Chairman, this bill would also authorize the new Assistant Secretary to provide DOE technical assistance, as well as support and response capabilities with respect to energy security risks to State, local, or tribal governments upon request.

Mr. Chairman, this legislation, along with the work that DOE is already doing, will go a long way in helping to protect the nation's electric infrastructure from hackers who would

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attempt to disrupt our energy grid and cause untold harm to our economy, our daily lives, and to our overall national security.

However, as the letter my office received yesterday from the American Public Power Association, the Edison Electric Institute, and the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association urges, we must act in a bipartisan way to get this bill and other legislation addressing cyber-security concerns out of Committee and onto the House Floor in a timely manner.

As policymakers, we all want to ensure that we are providing DOE and each of the agencies all of the authorities and resources that they need to comprehensively address the cyber threats that our nation faces.

So, I look forward to hearing from Assistant Secretary Evans on her feedback on this bill, as well as some of her top priorities in this new position.

And with that, I yield back the balance of my time...