



COMMITTEE ON
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Pallone Opening Remarks at Energy Hearing on Technology's Role in Empowering Electricity Consumers

Washington, D.C. – *Energy and Commerce Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ) delivered the following opening remarks today at a Subcommittee on Energy hearing on, "Powering America: Technology's Role in Empowering Consumers."*

Thank you for holding this hearing examining the role of technology and its impact on electricity consumers.

Today's electric grid is incorporating technology in ways unimaginable 20 years ago. Electricity and information on the grid no longer flow in one direction. As a result, consumers are embracing the ability to take control of their energy needs, not just through internet-connected devices such as smart thermostats, but also by turning their homes into generators of electricity through technologies like rooftop solar. This is all good news. And as electric technologies evolve, they are demanding a grid that accommodates two-way flows of electricity and information. Our job is to recognize these advancements and align policies to facilitate new technologies, empower consumers, and deliver a grid that is more resilient and efficient.

Two weeks ago, we held a hearing to look at how we define reliability in a transforming electricity industry. At that hearing Gerry Cauley, President and CEO of the North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC), stated that "over the past six years, the 50 largest events impacting the grid were caused by severe weather." Clearly, in today's world, making our grid more reliable means making it more resilient to the impacts of extreme weather.

Nowhere is this more evident today than in Puerto Rico, which is suffering from the aftermath of Hurricane Maria. While the overall toll is still being assessed, the island has lost at least 80 percent of its transmission and distribution infrastructure. The lack of electricity means that there is no power for lighting, air conditioning, drinking water treatment, refrigeration for food and medicine and so much more. This is catastrophic. We must keep the people of Puerto Rico in our hearts and minds and help them in any way we can. And it would be nice if the President could turn his attention away from NFL games long enough to realize that

everything in Puerto Rico is not fine – this is a humanitarian crisis and they need our help now.

Hurricane Maria followed Hurricanes Harvey and Irma, which also resulted in widespread outages in Texas and Florida. These hurricanes should serve as a wakeup call to prioritize investments in the technological advancements that can make our grid more resilient and help us adapt to the catastrophic potential of climate change.

Some of the new technologies we will discuss today, like battery storage and microgrids, are uniquely positioned to provide considerable resiliency benefits to the electric grid.

These new technologies are also enabling us to generate and store power closer to where it is consumed. Until recently, grid resiliency meant building more transmission lines and fortifying substations. But that's simply not the case today thanks to increased deployment of battery storage and microgrids as well as solar and other distributed energy resources. These new technologies are providing greater localized solutions to keeping critical facilities powered in the aftermath of severe weather that has caused large-scale damage to the grid.

In the aftermath of Superstorm Sandy, I spoke to a lot of local officials who were interested in developing microgrids in their area. Thankfully, New Jersey recently announced a plan to develop 13 microgrids across the state. This is a good start, but more needs to be done to fully protect our grid from another major storm.

The federal government should also be doing more to incentivize this shift to utilize new technologies to make our grid more resilient. Earlier this year, Committee Democrats introduced the LIFT America Act, which includes \$4 billion for modern, efficient, and resilient electric grid infrastructure. We need to be making real and significant investments in our country's grid infrastructure now so we can protect our grid from a major, long-term outage like we are seeing in Puerto Rico.

We have a knowledgeable group of witnesses before us today, and I look forward to hearing their testimony.

Thank you, I yield back.

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