Committee on Energy and Commerce

Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Subcommittee on Energy
Ranking Member Kathy Castor

Markup of 5 Bills, Subcommittee on Energy

February 4, 2026

Today's bills take important, bipartisan steps to ensure the strength of our electric grid. Several of these bills reauthorize vital programs created by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, protecting us against cyber and physical infrastructure threats.

However, it's not enough. We saw just last week amid Winter Storm Fern how a resilient, well-planned electric grid keeps people alive and reduces prices. In Texas, it was winterization and batteries – including more than 14 GW of new battery storage capacity added since 2021 – that saved the grid. Wind generation was higher than forecasted. Looking at market data, we can clearly see that transmission bottlenecks contributed to higher electric prices. When transmission capacity is limited, that means that customers in constrained areas must rely on higher-cost local generation resources, even though cheaper power exists nearby.

During the storm, we saw this in PJM, where electricity prices exceeded $1,500 per megawatt-hour at some Mid-Atlantic nodes, while prices were negative in nearby parts of Illinois at the same time. For every $1 invested in well-planned, long-distance high-capacity transmission, we get $5 in reliability and economic benefits.

These are modern solutions. What doesn't help is forcing old, polluting coal plants to stay online – especially when those operators and utilities don't even want them. Just look at Colorado, where the owners of a Colorado coal plant are suing the Department of Energy for forcing the plant to stay online just one day before it was set to retire. I agree that our grid is facing significant risks, as NERC has highlighted. But we can't just wave around the word "emergency" to justify bad policy.

Instead of investing in clean energy solutions, President Trump has threatened or canceled enough clean energy projects to power 13.5 million homes. This committee shouldn't stand idly by while the Administration takes illegal actions to keep new energy resources off the grid and withholds funding for grid upgrades.

Our neighbors back home are feeling this pain as they struggle with rising costs. Utility bills are up 13% under President Trump. 49 states and DC saw rate hikes announced in 2025 – including Florida, where our Republican Public Utilities Commission rubber-stamped almost $6 billion in rate increases last year.

Facing an energy affordability crisis, my Republican colleagues passed their Big Ugly Bill. They gutted the cost-saving programs and tax incentives that would have helped us build more energy and save families money. As a result, our neighbors will be poorer, and our electricity system will be less secure.

We will not solve our 21st century energy challenges with 20th century solutions. Just yesterday, in this room, we heard from FERC Commissioners about the strength that comes from a diverse energy mix and deploying next-generation tools like grid-enhancing technologies and distributed power plants.

This Committee should work to strengthen our transmission infrastructure, add solar-plus-battery systems, expand onshore and offshore wind power, increase energy efficiency, and incorporate grid-enhancing technologies and demand flexibility.

My Republican colleagues talk a lot about winning the AI race and safeguarding against national security threats from malicious foreign actors. But they don't seem to care that we're losing the 21st century energy race.

China now has about 44% of the world's operating utility-scale solar and wind, more than the European Union, United States, and India combined. They manufacture more than 90% of solar modules and 80% of wind turbines. They're exporting almost as much renewable capacity as they're installing domestically.

The United States is being left behind. Today's bills are not enough.

I urge my Republican colleagues to work with us in a bipartisan manner on additional, substantive policy that strengthens our grid reliability, helps us meet rising electricity demand, and lowers prices for hardworking families.

I yield back.