

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

Markup of 6 Bills, Subcommittee on Energy

July 14, 2026

Household electric bills are up as much as 18% since January 2025. Analysts predict families will pay \$4,500 more over the next 15 years thanks to the extreme, pro-polluter policies Republicans have passed. These price hikes are crushing my neighbors back home in Tampa, particularly as they face record heat waves and extreme weather.

As demand grows from data centers, advanced manufacturing, and electrification, we also need more reliable power that keeps costs down and pollution out of our communities.

Today's mostly bipartisan set of bills continue a tradition of carefully balancing safety, transparency, and efficiency to advance American leadership in nuclear energy. I'm glad that my Republican colleagues are working with us on this issue.

Nuclear energy can help meet rising electricity demand and lower energy bills, but only if the federal government can fulfill the duties that Congress envisioned when we passed the bipartisan ADVANCE Act in 2024.

The Department of Energy's recent nuclear supply chain announcement shows the scale of the opportunity: \$17.5 billion in loans for long-lead components that could support 10 new large-scale reactors, power nearly 10 million American households, and shorten deployment timelines by up to three years.

While nuclear energy can play a key role in powering our future, it won't address our immediate challenges. Gasoline prices, natural gas prices, and electricity rates are all rising right now.

Attacking clean, cheap energy while doubling down on fossil fuels is not an energy abundance strategy. It is a policy of higher bills, fewer jobs, more pollution, and a less reliable grid.

Even if we succeed in licensing and building nuclear reactors in the United States, it doesn't help us if we can't connect them to the grid in a timely manner.

America needs to build — yes, more clean firm power like nuclear, but also flexible energy resources, more storage, and more transmission. Just last week, the Department of Energy put out their annual Transmission Needs Study, which emphasized the need for interregional transmission to support reliability, grid resilience, and meeting demand growth.

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We need strong and trustworthy regulators to help us safely advance the next generation of nuclear energy. But the NRC is under attack. NRC commissioners have warned they could be fired for refusing to rubber-stamp a reactor. DOGE-affiliated staff with no nuclear safety experience have forced out career experts.

The NRC has lost nearly 500 staff since in the past two years — just as more than 100 companies are pursuing advanced nuclear technologies and the agency continues to oversee more than 90 operating reactors.

We should remove unnecessary barriers, support domestic enrichment capabilities, strengthen the nuclear workforce, and make sure DOE financing is paired with strong oversight and accountability.

But efficiency cannot mean cutting corners. Reform cannot mean weakening safeguards. And speed cannot come at the expense of transparency, independence, or public trust.

Today's bills are not enough to fix the problems that ail our power grid. I hope my Republican colleagues will work with us to make progress on building a 21st century grid — particularly to permit and build new transmission lines, and support all forms of clean, affordable energy. We can't afford to be complacent as our neighbors back home face soul-crushing energy costs and need our help.

I yield back.