

Committee on Energy and Commerce

**Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Full Committee Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr.**

Hearing on “The Role of Artificial Intelligence in Powering America’s Energy Future”

October 19, 2023

It is now day 17 of the House being paralyzed without a Speaker, and we are 29 days away from another potential government shutdown. This hearing comes at a time when House Republicans’ dysfunction is hurting the American people, weakening our economy, and undermining our national security.

All year, House Republicans have caved to the extreme elements in their party who have no interest in governing. They have forced severe cuts to critical federal programs in spite of a funding agreement between the former Speaker and President Biden. And they came dangerously close to a government shutdown that would have cost our national economy upwards of \$13 billion a week and forced our troops to work without pay.

I just think the American people deserve better. Democrats have repeatedly stopped this chaos and dysfunction from hurting everyday Americans, but it is long past time for House Republicans to reject the extremists in their party. We should be working together to lower costs for American families and to grow our economy and the middle-class. It is time for the chaos to end.

Today the Subcommittee is meeting to explore Artificial Intelligence tools and how they might help boost efficiency and reliability in the energy sector. AI technologies have a potential role to play in the energy sector, particularly in our ongoing efforts to lead the world in the clean energy transition. AI capabilities could help ease the transition to a net-zero grid, allowing grid operators to better forecast weather patterns that will drive electricity consumption and wind and solar generation. These tools can also allow greater deployment of distributed resources such as demand reduction and virtual power plant technologies. There is also great potential to use AI tools to help detect methane leaks and other sources of emissions from the oil and gas sector.

These are all promising opportunities but there are also a number of risks we must monitor. AI models are currently trained on specialized computer chips that consume tremendous amounts of electricity and consume large amounts of water for cooling needs. The specialized computer chips necessary to train AI models could also become an additional chokepoint in the energy sector if supply chain issues start to make them scarce, or if cyber vulnerabilities are introduced into models.

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More concerning is the fact that AI models are effectively “black boxes” – we simply lack the ability to explain how and why these models make decisions. And that problem will likely continue to get worse in the short term as models continue to scale in size and complexity. If an AI model changes its output, right now, it is nearly impossible for a human to know exactly why.

Given the vital role the electric grid plays in our everyday lives, I have concerns about integrating technologies that we do not understand into this critical infrastructure. We need to make sure that humans remain key decisionmakers in energy systems and retain the ability to intervene in a timely fashion. We simply cannot automate away critical human expert oversight and accountability.

And finally, I remain deeply concerned about the data privacy implications of AI technologies. I strongly believe that the bedrock of any AI regulation must be privacy legislation that includes data minimization and algorithmic accountability principles. Last year, Chair Rodgers and I worked in strong bipartisan fashion to pass the American Data Privacy and Protection Act out of our Committee by a vote of 50 to 2. I will continue to push for a comprehensive, national federal privacy standard.

So, with that, I am looking forward to this hearing and understanding the challenges and opportunities of integrating AI technologies into our energy system. However, I must note – if we want the House to truly perform the oversight that the American people desperately need with regards to AI and other technologies like it, the House needs strong and stable leadership. Right now, it is without a Speaker. I urge my Republican colleagues to work together with Democrats in a bipartisan fashion to help the entire country move forward.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I yield back.