

**Committee on Energy and Commerce**

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

***Hearing on “The Fiscal Year 2026 Department of Energy Budget”***

**June 10, 2025**

Today we’re here to discuss the Department of Energy’s fiscal year 2026 budget request. But the destruction of our national energy policy had already started before we received this flawed and harmful budget. It started on day one when Trump signed disastrous executive orders that halted federal grants and propped up polluting fossil fuels.

It continued with House Republicans passing the One Big Ugly Bill that eliminates programs that are lowering energy costs and helping to build clean energy manufacturing here in America – all so Republicans can give giant tax breaks to billionaires.

And now we have a Trump budget that will increase household energy costs, prioritize oil and gas, undermine clean energy, and gut energy assistance programs. At a time when energy demand is increasing, this budget will make it harder for our nation to meet the moment.

Secretary Wright, welcome to the Energy and Commerce Committee. I have tried to get answers from you on a number of actions at DOE ranging from staffing cuts to project delays and funding freezes. But every single letter I have sent has gone unanswered. When appearing before a different committee, you seemed to indicate that you view responding to Congress as an optional part of your job. I want to be clear: it is not, and responding to this Committee is part of your responsibility to the American people.

After all, you owe them an explanation of your actions over the last six months. The agency has forced Americans to pay higher energy bills to keep outdated and expensive coal plants online. It is revoking energy and water efficiency standards that lower energy bills for American families. It cancelled \$3.7 billion in grants that would lower emissions from the industrial sector and create thousands of good-paying energy jobs.

DOE also threw open its doors for Elon Musk and his DOGE minions. Musk forced out more than 3,500 DOE staffers, and now the agency has lost experienced and valuable personnel with critical expertise.

And now, the Trump Administration sends Congress a budget request that hollows out DOE even more – slashing funding by more than 25 percent. It slashes funding for the Weatherization Assistance Program, zeroes out grants for renewable grid integration and wind and solar energy, and cuts loan programs for advanced vehicle technologies and tribal energy.

Mr. Secretary, in your confirmation hearing, you indicated that expanding the grid was, “important to securing and modernizing a resilient electricity grid to meet growing electricity demand.” But your budget proposal rescinds billions of dollars in investments in the nation’s power grid making it even more difficult for us to modernize and secure it for the future.

The Trump Administration and Congressional Republicans claim to care about competing with China, but every action they take only leaves America further behind in the global energy leadership race. By freezing and cancelling investments in emerging clean energy technologies, the Trump Administration is letting China win. By undercutting manufacturing projects set to build electric vehicles and solar panels here in America, the Trump Administration is leaving the door wide open for our competitors. They are letting China further grow its own supply chains and its global market share. We were on the verge of a clean energy manufacturing renaissance, and the Trump Administration has ground it all to a halt.

And the Administration allowed its reckless alliance with Elon Musk and his DOGE minions to threaten the operations of the National Nuclear Security Administration and the Bonneville Power Administration. And now that the alliance has come to an end with an ongoing war of words on social media, the Administration now claims that Musk is only looking to support his financial interests. But they did NOT voice any concerns for Musk's very real conflicts of interest when he was decimating our federal agencies, indiscriminately firing workers, all while covertly stealing Americans' sensitive personal data. They didn't seem to care about it then.

Before I finish, Secretary Wright, it looks like you and I agree on at least one issue – that nuclear energy is worth investing in and that the Loan Programs Office has an important role to play. That's something I hope you will reiterate with Committee Republicans today who don't seem to share that view. In the One Big Ugly Bill, they completely zeroed out funding for DOE's Loan Programs Office.

It also appears that even you have some concerns about this budget request. In testimony before the Senate last month, you asked Congress to send DOE the budget it needs, not the one you asked for. So, I question your support for the budget that you are here to defend.

I'm looking forward to finally getting some answers today and with that I yield back the balance of my time.