

Committee on Energy and Commerce

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

Hearing on “Oversight of FERC: Advancing Affordable and Reliable Energy for All Americans”

February 3, 2026

I would like to welcome all five Commissioners to today’s hearing. You have a difficult job ahead of you. Our nation’s electric grid is in the middle of an affordability and reliability crisis. New Jerseyans are paying 15 percent more for power and 12 percent more for natural gas than they were a year ago. One of FERC’s most important responsibilities is to ensure “just and reasonable” prices. It is not working, and President Trump is making the electricity affordability crisis even worse.

And this not just a problem in New Jersey. Power prices have spiked across the country, and Trump’s campaign promise to cut them in half has proven to be just another broken promise. Last year, utilities requested a record \$31 billion in rate increases – double the pace of 2024. Prices nationwide are up 13 percent since Trump’s inauguration.

The reasons are clear. Our nation’s grid operators have proved themselves simply incapable of hooking up power to the grid fast enough – in no small part because their plans to expand the power grid are completely unfit for this day and age. I have made clear over the past year my displeasure at PJM, New Jersey’s grid operator, but while they are one of the worst offenders, they are not the only ones who have been caught asleep at the wheel.

When new sources of cleaner and cheaper power are ready to hook up to the grid, President Trump has blocked them for bogus reasons. Trump’s war against clean energy defies logic – particularly at a time when data centers powering artificial intelligence tools are adding power demand at a pace we have not seen in over a generation.

I want to be clear – AI tools cannot be built upon the backs of American families’ power bills. Data centers should be able to hook up to the grid, but they have to pay their fair share – and ensure that they are not going to cause the grid to collapse.

FERC’s role must be to establish rules of the road that make that happen. FERC must be the cop on the beat to ensure that Big Tech isn’t fleecing the average American to fund their ambitions.

FERC has the authority and the expertise to make this happen, but it is going to require the Commission to stand up to a White House that is bending over backwards for companies that are interested in building data centers to the detriment of American families’ monthly power bills. It is going to mean NOT discriminating against clean energy, no matter how much the White House may be pressuring you to do just that. And it is going to mean acting transparently, quickly, and decisively.

February 3, 2026

Page 2

In the long-term, the only way to deal with increased demand – no matter if it's from data centers, electric vehicles, or electrified home heating – is to build out the grid. And that is simply impossible while the White House wages a war on clean energy.

Offshore wind projects that were on the verge of delivering power to the grid have seen their permits illegally canceled. Hundreds of projects receiving funding from the Department of Energy had their funding illegally revoked, many simply because they were being built in a Democratic-run state. And potential clean energy projects on federal lands may never get off the ground because the White House has created an impossible bureaucratic nightmare for any company trying to build.

These actions are an embarrassment to our nation, but they're also a threat to the pocketbooks and the safety of American families across the country.

Just last week, the North American Electric Reliability Corporation warned that a huge swath of the nation's grid would be at high risk for blackouts by the end of this decade. The winter storm that blasted New Jersey and much of the East Coast just over a week ago pushed us right up to the brink. If Republicans have their way, the next winter storm might push us over the edge instead.

We have to stop this madness. I look forward to hearing about how FERC is working to ensure that Americans have affordable electricity and a reliable electric grid in the face of skyrocketing demand.

Thank you and I yield back the balance of my time.