

Committee on Energy and Commerce

**Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Subcommittee on Energy Member Scott Peters**

Hearing on “Winter Storm Fern Lessons: Supplying Reliable Power to Meet Peak Demand”

March 17, 2026

Thank you Chair Latta, for holding this important hearing. Ranking Member Castor was delayed by the weather today, so I’m stepping in for her to give an opening statement.

At nearly every hearing this year, I have talked about the significant growth in energy demand every region in the United States is facing. Even though that growth is very exciting, it comes with real challenges that everyone at this table is grappling with.

Americans are feeling the strain of these challenges on their wallets. Electricity costs are eight percent higher today than they were a year ago. Some projections show residential utility rates climbing as much as eighteen percent in the coming years. No region has been spared.

I have also been saying at nearly every hearing this Congress that this committee is wasting time. I – and every utility, grid operator, and developer I talk to – do not think that we are ready to meet the current moment.

Right now, we are on track lose our competitive edge to nations like China. In the 2020s, China has completed more than eighty-two hundred miles of high voltage long-range transmission lines, while the U.S. has built only 375. European utilities are also rapidly increasing the minimum transfer capacity between countries to move power back and forth. Over 125,000 miles of advanced conductors – which can help us get the most out of the grid – have been installed in India, Europe and China. The U.S. has installed less than ten percent of that.

By only focusing on building the kinds of generation one party likes, or by keeping old, inefficient, and expensive coal plants online, we are holding our country back. Every witness before us has been clear: we need more of everything, whether it be transmission, pipelines, solar, wind, or gas. But that doesn’t mean we need to keep every asset that is uneconomic, or inefficient.

Instead of focusing on how to develop a long-term plan and holistic energy strategy – which has been proven to decrease costs and improve reliability for everyone – we are constantly talking about short-term fixes that will increase costs, steamroll state regulators, and negatively impact reliability in the long run.

Look at Texas, which is slated to receive roughly half of U.S. industrial electricity demand growth through 2030. When the natural gas system failed and people died from the cold in superstorm Uri, did Texas exclusively turn to more natural gas, or keeping coal plants open?

No – Texas reduced its risk of blackouts and brownouts from 10% to 1% by deploying all resources: including solar energy and batteries for storage. Now, they are primed to dominate this era of sustained load growth, because they built new generation to meet demand, instead of only holding onto the past.

To confront this challenge we, as a country, must build more generation, make it easier to connect that generation to the grid, and increase regional and interregional access to that energy. Right now there are over 2,500 gigawatts worth of energy projects in the interconnection queue, where the number one barrier to connecting resources is insufficient grid capacity, or too much grid congestion in a given area.

In 2024, that transmission congestion – our inability to move power around the grid – costs customers over \$12 billion. It happened during Winter Storm Fern. If we cannot act decisively to clear these queues, we will lose that power, costs will further increase, and grid reliability will suffer.

To do that, we need to build a better grid nationwide, which will increase competition, reduce congestion and ensure customers can access that next cheapest electron. That is our north star.

The North American Electric Reliability Corporation – one of our witnesses today – has said clearly that an additional 35 gigawatts of interregional transfer capability across the country would make the grid more resilient, lower costs, and enable us to better meet load growth. I agree with my colleagues in the majority that the Federal government needs to take a somewhat stronger hand in planning and permitting, in collaboration with state partners, to make sure we can keep the lights on.

But we need to stop looking backwards. I understand that it is difficult to reach consensus, but doing nothing is costing us money, hurting the reliability of the grid, and making us less competitive. We need to build new generation of all kinds, reform the permitting process, and build a better grid. That will put us in position to compete. But we need everyone at the table; we will not meet this moment if our approach is “business as usual.”

I look forward to hearing about some potential solutions from our witnesses, and working with my colleagues to find some as well.

Thank you, I yield back.