

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

Markup of 29 Bills, Full Committee

July 20, 2026

Household electric bills have risen 18% in the United States since January 2025. Since the President launched his reckless, illegal war in Iran, households have spent nearly \$500 more on gasoline. Today's national average is over \$4 a gallon. My neighbors in Tampa Bay are looking for relief.

That's why I'm glad that this Committee is finally considering legislation to protect hardworking American families from rising energy costs. My Ratepayer Protection Act with Rep. Evans is a bipartisan, common-sense bill to make data centers pay their fair share for the energy they use while we continue to advance American leadership in artificial intelligence.

However, we also need to bring more electricity online to serve everyone. One way that we can lower energy prices is by unlocking the over 2000 gigawatts of energy waiting to connect to the U.S. grid. Unfortunately, our interconnection process is broken.

It often takes years to conduct the necessary studies to connect new energy generation resources. Most projects that apply for interconnection are ultimately withdrawn, sometimes requiring the whole study process to start over from scratch.

This results in higher costs, which are ultimately passed on to households and businesses in the form of higher energy bills.

Our broken interconnection queues are also holding back U.S. leadership in artificial intelligence. Access to power is the dominant bottleneck for AI data center development. And we know that tech companies want to power those data centers with clean, affordable energy.

Business as usual is simply not enough. My bill, the Expediting Generator Interconnection Procedures Act, would help make reasonable, common-sense updates to speed up the interconnection process. It gives grid operators more flexibility and promotes the use of proven tools like automation.

I'm disappointed that my Republican colleagues have decided to not include this bill in today's markup. But I am hopeful that we can continue to have a real conversation about it moving forward.

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The bipartisan bills we're considering today are an important first step. But they're not enough – if my Republican colleagues work with us, we have a real opportunity to build an energy system that protects working families and powers the 21st century.

I yield back.