# LEADING THE CHARGE: OPPORTUNITIES TO STRENGTHEN AMERICA'S ENERGY RELIABILITY

## HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC GROWTH, ENERGY POLICY, AND REGULATORY AFFAIRS

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

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# LEADING THE CHARGE: OPPORTUNITIES TO STRENGTHEN AMERICA'S ENERGY RELIABILITY

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**Wednesday, February 26, 2025**

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC GROWTH, ENERGY POLICY, AND REGULATORY AFFAIRS
*Washington, D.C.*

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:34 a.m., in room 2247, Rayburn Office Building, Hon. Eric Burlison, [Chairman of the Subcommittee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Burlison, Palmer, Higgins, Perry, Boebert, Frost, Ansari, Min, and Khanna.

Mr. BURLISON. The Subcommittee on Economic Growth, Energy Policy and Regulatory Affairs will come to order. I just want to welcome everyone to the hearing. Without objection, the Chair may declare a recess at any time. I recognize myself for the purpose of making an opening statement.

Welcome to the first hearing of the Subcommittee on Economic Growth, Energy Policy, and Regulatory Affairs for the 119th Congress.

It is a personal honor to serve as the Chairman of this Committee and I look forward to working with Ranking Member Frost and my colleagues on this Subcommittee over the course of this Congress as we tackle urgent problems facing the American people.

Today's hearing topic concerns every district across the country: the state of America's energy reliability. Power demand is expected to grow dramatically, if not exponentially, in the coming years as new manufacturing facilities and data centers are built throughout the country.

With the new demand comes a lot of questions. Where will this additional power come from? Are we doing enough to create more power generation and transmission?

If we are not, are we setting our power grid up to crash? What will all this mean for the American people and how can they be assured that energy bills will not continue to rise?

New innovation, particularly in the field of nuclear energy, offers promising solutions but it is often thwarted from reaching its full

potential due to regulatory and permitting challenges imposed by this government.

Reliable and trusted sources of power generation such as natural gas and coal are still fighting against regulatory obstacles created by the previous Administration. Burdensome regulations have been the silent killer of economic growth and prosperity in our country and have lasting implications for U.S. industries, particularly the power sector.

The Biden EPA power plant rule will, if left in place, force premature retirement of existing power plants across the country without providing a clear path forward for bringing new power generation online.

Last Congress I introduced the Reliable Grid Act of 2024 to address this issue and ensure that Americans everywhere have access to affordable, reliable energy supplies.

Under the Trump Administration, significant steps are already being taken to revitalize our Nation's energy sector. Recent executive actions seek to expand oil and gas production, reverse previous limitations, and unleash our energy independence.

These initiatives, coupled with an ongoing regulatory reforms to alleviate unnecessary burdens on energy development, are poised to modernize our power generation and transmission infrastructure, ensuring reliable and affordable energy supply for all Americans.

Over the course of this Congress I hope that this Subcommittee can shed light on where reforms are needed and bring forth practical and hopeful bipartisan solutions to better serve the American people.

I look forward to our conversation here today, and with that I yield to Ranking Member Frost for his opening statement.

Mr. FROST. Thank you so much, Chairman Burlison, and thank you to the witnesses for being here this morning.

As someone who grew up experiencing increasingly frequent hurricanes and power outages it is so important for our Subcommittee to work on the issue of energy reliability and I look forward to that.

My constituents and many of our constituents are in danger because of the power outages after extreme weather. They cost families thousands of dollars in wasted food, medicine, create mold, mildew damage and it is deadly.

I introduced the bipartisan Energy Storage for Resilient Homes Act so Floridians and folks across the country can install home energy storage batteries as part of FEMA's disaster mitigation support.

Proper energy storage combined with clean energy means reliable electricity. One meta-analysis of 11 studies shows that we can match energy supply and demand under any conditions with a 70 to 90 percent clean energy grid.

Promoting clean energy is a key part of promoting reliable energy and it has also been a huge benefit to the American economy.

The support for clean energy that was found in the Inflation Reduction Act, including the home energy rebate programs, helped our energy supply while also lowering bills and taxes for financially burdened families upgrading our appliances and protecting our homes from extreme weather.

Despite those benefits, unfortunately, President Trump has now frozen a lot of this funding. The law lowered emissions, employed half a million Americans, and boosted American manufacturing while shrinking costs for families.

From hurricanes to droughts, the climate crisis is here and it is our patriotic duty to do everything we can to reverse it and right now our government is stuck in a vicious cycle of working to produce more fossil fuels which then increases pay at big oil companies, which then worsens the climate collapse. Then the government continues to subsidize the fossil fuels and then we produce more fossil fuels.

But, unfortunately, we have not seen these costs go down for working families and I do think we need to break this cycle.

One of President Trump's first executive orders called Unleashing American Energy is supposedly aimed at restoring American prosperity through affordable and reliable energy. However, the methodology is extremely weak.

First, we continue to say that we are going to be imposing tariffs on goods from Canada including crude oil but the U.S. is heavily reliant on Canadian oil because most of the oil produced here is not compatible with our refineries and vehicles.

Tariffs levied on Canada will increase energy prices for Americans. And it is not just energy. Higher energy costs make it more expensive to transport nearly all goods and materials across the country.

So, from clothing to food the cost of energy is important in every single thing.

Second, a key component of the executive order is ending the use of the social cost of carbon measured in Federal policy-making.

This measure enables agencies to accurately account for all the cost of carbon-based fossil fuels and ensure companies are doing that the companies that are doing the polluting are paying for the cost of the pollution.

I just want to paint a picture of why it is so important to use the social cost of carbon measure. Let us say a new gas-fired power plant is built in the historic town of Eatonville, Florida, which is in my district.

A family that lives a few miles away will not see a penny of that company's profits but they will have to pay more when their kids get asthma or the parents have lung cancer.

And as the increased carbon emissions cause climate change they are at greater risk of a hurricane destroying their home or natural disasters, which also means that they will face higher insurance premiums if they can get insurance at all.

This might just be a hypothetical but it is already the reality for thousands of Floridians and millions across the country. I am looking forward to a lot of bipartisanship on this committee, though, in terms of many different things.

The Chair and I met. We talked a lot about housing and homeowners insurance and a lot of different issues that matters to everybody up here on the dais.

The last thing I want to talk about real quick is a campaign promise that we are going to work at keeping track of.

On the campaign trail President Trump promised that, quote, "Under my Administration we will be slashing energy and electricity prices by half within 12 months and at maximum 18 months," end quote.

It is a pretty hefty promise. It seems unlikely but we are going to be counting to make sure that we can hold the President accountable to this campaign promise because we would love to see energy costs for people at home go down, and it is so important that people understand that just because the price of energy and electricity is going down does not guarantee that those savings will be passed along to consumers and working families.

And so, we will be keeping track of that throughout the year. We have got 509 days left and we will see how that goes.

The solution to how we can lower costs and protect our planet is right in front of our faces. It is clean renewable energy. But I am here to talk about the future and what we can accomplish.

So, thank you, and I yield back.

Mr. BURLISON. Thank you, Ranking Member Frost.

I am excited to introduce our distinguished panel of witnesses today. I would like to first welcome Alex Epstein who is an author as well as the President and Founder of a think tank called Center for Industrial Progress.

Next we have Mandy Gunasekara who is also an author and previously served as a Chief of Staff at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency during the first Trump Administration.

And next we have Alex Herrgott who is the Founder and President of the Permitting Institute. Alex previously served on the White House Council for Environmental Quality, the Federal Permitting Improvement Steering Council, and in multiple roles on Capitol Hill.

Last, we have Dr. Rachel Cleetus who serves as the Policy Director within the Climate and Energy Program at the Union of Concerned Scientists.

I want to thank each and every one of our witnesses for being here today and I look forward to hearing your testimony.

Pursuant to rule 9(g) the witnesses will stand and raise their right hand.

Do you solemnly swear to affirm that the testimony that you are about to give is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth so help you God?

[Witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

Mr. BURLISON. Let the record show that the witnesses answered in the affirmative.

All right. I am going to recognize you now for your opening statements. We appreciate you being here today, and let me remind the witnesses that we have read your written statement and it will appear in the full in the record.

Please limit your oral statements to 5 minutes. As a reminder, please press the button on the microphone in front of you so that it is on. I think you all know how to do that.

And when it comes to the lights, after 4 minutes the light will turn yellow. When the red light comes on it is time to wrap up your conversation.

I now recognize Mr. Epstein for his opening statement.

**STATEMENT OF ALEX EPSTEIN**
**PRESIDENT AND FOUNDER**
**CENTER FOR INDUSTRIAL PROGRESS**

Mr. EPSTEIN. Thank you.

America is in an electricity crisis so shortages are now routine throughout the U.S., and if we do not start increasing reliable generation very quickly our grid will get crushed, especially by the demands of AI.

The first step in solving the crisis is to understand it and at root our electricity crisis is very simple. We are artificially restricting the supply of reliable electricity and we are artificially increasing the demand for reliable electricity.

So, let us start off with artificially restricting the supply. The government does this in three core ways: by destroying reliable power plants, by delaying them, and by defunding them, and there are five very specific policies that need to be changed in this regard.

So, one is the is, rather, the near criminalization of nuclear. It needs to be decriminalized. So, in the 1970s we had clean, safe nuclear power become affordable and it quickly grew to about 20 percent of American power, and it was still in its early stages, so it had the potential to become far more affordable and plentiful.

But we had crushing irrational regulation that made nuclear expensive or even impossible to build. So, we need Congress and the Administration to unleash nuclear energy from these irrational, pseudoscientific regulations and in my testimony I have dozens of these things, but I will just give you some examples for each policy.

And for nuclear the most important thing is the NRC, hopefully, with help of Congress needs to reject what is called the linear no threshold model of danger, which is a totally pseudoscientific model that falsely assumes that there is no safe dose of radiation when there absolutely is and it needs to replace it with a scientific, what is called threshold based model.

So, this will remove the number-one barrier to safe and affordable nuclear energy in America. So, unleashing nuclear is crucial but it is a medium to long-term solution.

The thing we need to do most urgently is to stop the policies that are destroying, delaying, and defunding the fossil fuel power plants that are our only means of getting reliable electricity on a large scale.

We are hearing that, you know, you can replace them with unreliable solar and wind. Feel free to ask me about that, but that has proven to be very false in practice.

So, we have four shutdowns of fossil fuel plants. The EPA keeps passing rules. Others do this but the EPA in particular keeps passing rules that shut down coal plants and prevent new natural gas plants and fundamentally what EPA needs to do properly is cost benefit analysis including when it is doing policies that attack our grid.

It needs to recognize that shutting down the grid or ruining the grid has a near infinite cost and it is not doing that in its calculations.

No. 1 concrete thing is it needs to rescind the GHG standards for power plants, which effectively ban existing coal plants and prevent new gas plants in a world where we have much more demand. So, it is just a totally insane policy.

No. 3 is onerous permitting policies, and I know one of the witnesses is focusing on that so I will just say a little bit about that, because we are we are shutting down and preventing fossil fuel power plants, but we are also delaying them by having all these requirements to our already onerous permitting process.

So, things like making each power plant, this relates to the social cost of carbon which I think is intellectually a scam so I am happy to talk about that, but you make each little power plant say, what are your GHG emissions? And it is totally ridiculous because it makes no difference globally and yet you are delaying things for years on the basis of this. So, we need to get rid of that.

We need to severely reform NEPA. Many other things in my written testimony.

No. 4, and this relates to this issue of defunding reliable power plants, we need to have market rules that value reliability. Right now, we have market rules that devalue reliability.

So, what the government does is with electricity markets they are not free markets. They are these constructs that the government creates, and they have this crazy feature, which is they have no price penalty for unreliability, which no other market has.

And so, what this does is this allows unreliable solar and wind to take money away from reliable plants. So, we need to reform that. I have some ideas about that in my written testimony.

And on top of that, we need to get rid of these subsidies for unreliable power. So, not only do we not have a price penalty but on top of that we actually reward unreliable power by giving them special subsidies.

So, we are actually paying extra for unreliable power. It is just totally insane, and it is part of the reason why we have a crisis.

So, we need to get rid of those subsidies. So, we need to get rid of, I believe, all the IRA subsidies but in particular what are called the clean electricity ones that dramatically favor unreliable solar and wind.

Those are the most deadly ones that Congress needs to eliminate immediately, whether it is through reconciliation or something else.

And then finally, on top of all this restriction of the supply, we are artificially increasing demand through forced electrification so things like forced EVs, forced heat pumps. Again, when we have a shortage of supply, and we have a lot of organic demand from AI, it is absolutely insane and unconscionable to mandate new demand from EVs and from heat pumps that people do not want and are not willing to pay for on a free market.

So, as I said at the outset, our crisis is simple. We are artificially restricting supply. We are artificially increasing demand. The solution is fundamentally simple: unleash supply, end forced electrification, end forced demand. In practice, this requires a lot of very little steps, so I have dozens of these in my testimony.

And very happy to be here and I am grateful for the opportunity to help in any way I can because we want to go right now from

electricity crisis to electricity abundance, and we can do it, but it is going to take some very dramatic actions.

Thank you.

Mr. BURLISON. Thank you, Mr. Epstein.

I now recognize Ms. Gunasekara for her opening statement. I hope I got your name right.

**STATEMENT OF MANDY GUNASEKARA**
**FORMER CHIEF OF STAFF**
**U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY**

Ms. GUNASEKARA. You did. You did. Quite well.

Chairman Burlison, Ranking Member Frost, Members of the Subcommittee, it really is wonderful to be here with you all. I appreciate the invitation today to discuss the opportunity to create a future of energy abundance, improved reliability, and lower energy costs to the benefit of American families.

The Subcommittee's efforts to create this future of abundance—it is critical to economic growth, grid stability, as well as stabilizing everyday cost.

Over the last 4 years Americans had to suffer the consequences of an Administration that sought to constrain traditional energy development, mainly coal, oil, and natural gas that still provide 80 percent of our daily energy needs, and force second rate technologies onto the American people.

I have testified to this before, and I think it is worth repeating that many of the policies put forward in the last Administration were fundamentally against American energy development and they made the necessities of life a financial burden.

We must not continue these same policy mistakes. For example, from January 1921 throughout the following 4 years Americans saw energy prices skyrocket. From heating oil to electricity, natural gas, they all became untenable and as a result one in six American families have been behind on their utility bills for many, many years.

The cost of average households rose around $10,000, significantly straining budgets, and low income Americans also struggled in especially critical ways. In some cases, they would choose to go without food, medical care, or prescriptions simply to make ends meet because of this rising cost of energy.

Now, these hardships, among many others, are why energy policy was a key focus of the recent election. There is a critical need for reliable, affordable energy and we know how to deliver this need in the United States better than any other country.

President Trump understands this as do the majority of the American people that have entrusted him to once again deliver on the promise of American energy dominance and support the America first policies necessary to actually achieve it.

This includes addressing aging infrastructure that led to inefficiencies and increased outages throughout the country. Alex was talking about—Epstein, I should say Herrgott and Epstein—but he was talking about this.

Well, while this issue—it certainly has received a lot of attention, especially in this House—the policies aimed at addressing it have missed the mark.

Rolling brownouts and blackouts have become much more common across America. In 2023 the North American Electric Reliability Corporation, one of the agencies responsible for assessing reliability in this country, listed, quote, "energy policy as a leading risk to electric reliability" for the first time.

Commonly cited were policies that shifted resources away from investing and upgrading existing infrastructure and toward fruitless net zero goals and Green New Deal policies.

The most recent 2024 report reiterated these same issues, characterizing many energy regions at, quote, "high risk" of resource adequacy shortfalls over the next decade.

Now, the good news, I would say, is that Congress can shift energy policy back toward what will actually work. They can cut unnecessary red tape, streamline the permitting process, address a growing energy imbalance that has been the result of an overreliance and forced shift toward renewables like wind and solar while fast tracking the closure of base load generation from coal, natural gas, and even nuclear.

Now, in my written testimony I listed out a number of policy recommendations. I would like to highlight just a few that I think are important to discuss with regard to today's hearing.

One is accepting the reality that fossil fuels provide the bulk of energy that we use every day, and that energy use is expected to grow for a variety of reasons. Instead of working to ban or constrain their use we should support efforts to make them cleaner and more efficient, not shut them down.

Also, protect the foundation of the grid. What I am referring to is ensuring base load energy, which is the most important in terms of stabilization and cost, that we protect those.

Policy leaders must consider a way, or I would suggest they consider ways, to account for the value of base load energy especially with onsite fuel storage that can withstand supply chain disruptions we know are inevitable in this space at some point.

Also, ensure that grid reliability or resiliency standards are technology neutral, so grid operators and engineers have the flexibility to plan for and respond to major swings in demand that, again, we know are inevitable in this space.

Establishing balanced environmental standards; there is a lot of work already ongoing at the U.S. EPA but ensuring that standards are based on proven, not prospective timelines, they take cost in consideration and have flexible timelines for compliance.

Also—I think this is really important and something that is often overlooked—prioritizing mining in America. Incentivize domestic manufacturing of all energy technologies and the domestic mining of minerals that go into these technologies.

I think approving the Twin Metals Mine in northeastern Minnesota would be a very important and effective good first step. Also being open to new innovative technologies.

One that I talk a lot about is the role of bitcoin miners in stabilizing grids. There is a lot of opportunities and new innovations, and considering those would be very important.

Again, I thank you for your attention to this important policy. I appreciate the opportunity to be here, and I look forward to your questions.

Mr. BURLISON. Thank you, Ms. Gunasekara.
I now recognize Mr. Herrgott for his opening statement.

**STATEMENT OF ALEX HERRGOTT**
**CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER AND PRESIDENT**
**THE PERMITTING INSTITUTE**

Mr. HERRGOTT. Good morning.
Chairman Burlison, Ranking Member Frost, my name is Alex Herrgott, and I am President of the Permitting Institute. Since 2021, TPI has operated as a nonpartisan nonprofit trade association.
Our members and partners constitute the largest developers in the United States who all collectively support the common goal of accelerating infrastructure improvement across all sectors: conventional, renewable energy, transportation, water, pipelines, mining, manufacturing, ports, water, broadband.
We believe the uncertainties of election cycles, divisive permitting policy battles, and the prioritization of infrastructure sectors and energy sources are, largely, unnecessary distractions.
These distractions put hundreds of billions of dollars in current private sector investment at constant risk of lengthy delays and project abandonment, driving up energy and household good costs and ultimately weakening our global competitiveness.
This situation is unsustainable for all Americans regardless of political affiliation. There is hundreds of billions of private sector investment that remains on the sidelines and mayors and Governors who are committing billions of taxpayer revenue 20 years out in the future.
The inconvenient truth is that for nearly a decade Congress' legislative efforts to address this problem have fallen short. Opponents of more aggressive changes to permitting laws often fail to recognize that every project that disturbs the earth, impacts habitats, or alters landscapes creates unavoidable interactions with nature.
It does not matter if it is offshore wind, transmission, wind, solar, hydrogen. It all falls under the same 60 environmental laws that we cannot get out of our own way on.
These interactions trigger reviews under the hundreds of laws and regulations governing infrastructure permits at the Federal, state, and local levels.
Over the last decade, Congress has reached consensus on various process reforms aimed at achieving greater coordination and efficiency but has left untouched the statutory provisions, some over 100 years old.
These temporary fixes fail to address the underlying issues. One of the major issues are transparency. In 2025 President Biden's Council of Environmental Quality released a report claiming it reduced the median time for agencies to complete environmental review statements from 3.1 to 2.4 years. The Administration touted that this is a 23 percent improvement over Trump's first term.
However, this is just not accurate. My members must have missed the memo on that because the problem is getting worse, not better.

Typically, TPR refrains from engaging in debates about the appropriate size and scope of Federal infrastructure initiatives.

However, given the trillions in unprecedented debt spending that have already been incurred obligating future generations of American taxpayers to rebuild our infrastructure only to rebuild it again with their own money 30, 40 years from now, not addressing permitting amounts to legislative malpractice.

Our broken system allows agencies to sit on applications for years and decades in cases with no certainty of eventual project approval or any response at all.

TPI does not claim that Federal agencies owe project developers yes, but we owe them an answer in an appropriate amount of time. Once in the process, developers, even today, find themselves in the dark, uncertain of where their projects stand along the concurrent permitting pathways with various Federal agencies.

Over the past several years some Federal agencies have developed new informal and formal policies, partly due to the requirements for 2-year average timelines. These policies front load biological, cultural, and historical survey requirements before the formal review process begins, pushing the official starting point even further into the future. See my comments earlier about CEQ's manipulation of the statistical relevance of the data.

Even with the recent Federal funding more than 95 percent of major U.S. investments in energy are entirely supported by the private sector. Infrastructure investors require predictability, yet they are often treated as adversaries in conflict with Federal regulators rather than partners in rebuilding the Nation.

We cannot get out of our own way. Without a systematic shift in how we address permitting in the United States Federal and state courts will increasingly take on the role of interpreting appropriate application of administrative and procedural roles and rendering science-based decisions on behalf of the agencies.

This cannot be the way forward. Congress must address both permitting process reform and litigation reform. While necessary litigation reform is necessary, without the underlying permitting reform we are only addressing the symptom and not the root cause.

Despite a bipartisan desire to tackle these existential issues, pressure from vocal stakeholders on both sides and a political tendency to avoid risk perpetuates the status quo, leaving lawmakers searching for superficial fixes.

With a load growth that for the last 20 years has been 1 percent year over year and is about to jump to 20 percent, there is going to be plenty of blame going around in the House and the Senate.

The blame is going to metastasize. Yet, at the very core of it is the issue that we can fix now before the issue becomes untenable. Both Republicans and Democrats support large-scale energy projects including transmission, wind, natural gas, solar, critical minerals, hydro, carbon capture, and hydrogen.

Energy shortages, price instability, and supply constraints and increased construction costs contribute to the human, environmental, and financial costs of these delays.

With each passing month the window for solutions continues to shrink and the cost of living in America rises. Despite these chal-

lenges, I am optimistic that we can make progress this year and in the years to come.

There are glimmers of hope as the proverbial strange bedfellows find common cause. Before looking at the actions of President Trump and the executive orders as something that is to be scoffed at, we must look at the fact that we need to break down the system and change the paradigm and rebuild it in a rational way and the way in which the real world actually works, not relying on laws that were written more than 100 years ago, many 30 years before the internet, to govern the way that we build infrastructure and put billions and billions into a system that does not serve American purposes.

A project development cycle of 7 to 10 years is simply too long. By working together, we can advance permanent reforms to build a 21st century infrastructure that safeguards communities, protects the cultural resources, and creates jobs and brings prosperity to every corner of America.

Thank you. I look forward to questions.

Mr. BURLISON. Thank you.

I now recognize Dr. Cleetus for her opening statement.

**STATEMENT OF RACHEL CLEETUS**
**POLICY DIRECTOR**
**CLIMATE AND ENERGY PROGRAM**
**UNION OF CONCERNED SCIENTISTS**

Ms. CLEETUS. Good morning.

Thank you so much, Chairman Burlison, Ranking Member Frost, and Members of the Subcommittee for holding this hearing.

My name is Rachel Cleetus. I am the Policy Director for the Climate and Energy Program at the Union of Concerned Scientists. We are a nonpartisan science advocacy organization.

I want to leave you with three things today. One is that our transition of our electric system to one that is modernized, more flexible, with more renewables and storage is the best way to protect consumer costs as well as safeguard health, make sure that we are competitive on the global stage, and that we are innovating as we go along. There are tremendous economic and health benefits from this transition.

No. 2, doubling down on fossil fuels is harmful. It is taking us in exactly the wrong direction and actually there is ample evidence that natural gas price volatility is one of the factors driving increased electricity prices as well as reliability concerns in the power grid.

And No. 3, in 2025 we should not ask any American to choose between their health and prosperity. We can have both and we should have both, and here is how we can do it. Ramping up renewable energy, energy efficiency and storage, investing in a modernized, more resilient electric grid will help cut power bills, they will boost business opportunities, and improve public health.

Meanwhile, if we double down on fossil fuels all we are doing is serving to promote the profits of fossil fuel companies at the expense of the American public.

Renewable energy is now the dominant source of new power generation capacity because, frankly, in many parts of the country it is the cheapest source, and we can bring it online quickly.

Last year renewables and battery storage accounted for 94 percent of all new large-scale capacity with solar and battery storage leading the charge. In 2025 and 2026 solar generation is—we are going to get about 25 percent of our electricity generation from renewables and solar generation is expected to jump 45 percent between 2024 and 2026.

The Inflation Reduction Act and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act provide critical funding to accelerate this clean energy transition, and it is benefiting communities across the country in red states and blue states.

It is helping expand access to clean, affordable energy, building domestic manufacturing and supply chains, creating good paying jobs and helping limit pollution from fossil fuels.

In the last year U.S. investments in clean technologies reached $272 billion. That is crucial to keeping our businesses competitive in a world where greener products are increasingly in demand.

The current Administration's actions to claw back or freeze this funding is, frankly, unfathomable. It is creating a disruption and market uncertainty for businesses that are trying to lean into opportunities right now.

It is going to cede leadership on technology advancement, it is going to cut jobs, and ultimately it is going to harm electric reliability and increase energy costs.

Trying to boost fossil fuels and turn back the clock—that is the exact opposite direction. We are a nation that embraces modernizing. We are a nation that embraces innovation.

Let us embrace the future and not get stuck in the past. A rush to further expand LNG exports is only going to exacerbate price risk to consumers. Recent extreme weather events underscore that gas power plants face significant reliability concerns with many catastrophic failures occurring during winter.

Worsening heat waves, wildfires, drought are also putting pressure on the grid, and what we find is that hybrid systems that couple renewable energy with storage provide significant grid reliability services.

For example, during the heat domes that we saw last year and the year before in the Texas grid it was solar plus storage that helped save the day.

The power sector does need to plan for increased demand but the way to do that is manage and plan the demand growth to align with expansion of clean energy.

We already are at record fossil fuel highs, whether it comes to oil or LNG. There is no problem in terms of expansion of fossil fuels, unfortunately, even as the climate crisis worsens.

What we need to do is unleash clean renewable power, the transmission to go with it, and energy efficiency. The grid is desperately in need of upgrades and expansion. It has got a C-grade from the American Society of Civil Engineers.

During extreme weather and climate events we have seen power outages that affect millions, cost billions of dollars in damages. We do need to quickly expand investments in a resilient transmission

system built for the future climate conditions that scientists are telling us are going to worsen.

We can integrate higher levels of renewables, provide reliability benefits, reduce bills, reduce pollution. Modernizing the power sector also provides opportunities to clean up air, water, and soil pollution.

That is a critical factor that communities around the country are depending on us for, especially communities that are overburdened by pollution today.

We need to target investments in those communities so that they too can reap the benefits of a more affordable, cleaner modern energy system.

Burning fossil fuels is the primary driver of human-caused climate change which is already exerting a fearsome toll around the country. We can sharply cut heat trapping emissions while delivering billions of dollars in consumer energy savings and public health benefits.

So, modernizing and cleaning up the power sector is vital for the economy, for us to compete globally, and it is the best way to protect reliability and consumers' pocketbooks.

Thank you.

Mr. BURLISON. Thank you. I now recognize myself for 5 minutes of questions.

Mr. Epstein, in my home state of Missouri we rely predominantly on coal for electricity generation. The previous Administration's proposed regulation on power plants would lead to the premature closure of fossil fuel-fired power plants across the country including Missouri.

And I will tell you, I had a sobering moment during winter storm Yuri when we had 2 weeks of negative, you know, double digit temperature and we were hearing about reliability problems.

They were warning of brownouts. They were warning that they may have to shut down power and our the heating of our own personal home was barely keeping up, and I will tell you, looking out the window of my backyard and seeing that we had a coal-fired power plant that was going I was thankful to God that we had that at that time.

Unfortunately, some people died in winter storm Yuri, a hundred and fifty people. So, this is very sobering. It is very real.

My question is how should Congress and the new Trump Administration address misguided regulations to ensure that Americans in every district have access to affordable, reliable electricity supplies and never face having to freeze to death in modern America.

Mr. EPSTEIN. I mean, first of all, they really—and in particular let us focus on EPA—they really need to recognize what you are saying, which is that a reliable grid is an existential thing for human life, including human health.

I think, you know, we heard an example about like, oh, what if you put a natural gas plant and it is going to harm people's health. That is pseudoscience. Natural gas burns incredibly cleanly.

But what does harm people's health is not having a reliable natural gas plant. Imagine not having reliable natural gas in Florida, not having coal in Missouri.

Like these, you know, cold is the number-one cause of climate-related death, despite people are afraid of warming. Like, the EPA when it is doing cost benefit analyses, which it needs to do more of and Congress should make it do more of, it needs to factor in the reliability of the grid as a crucial factor.

And one thing I know you and I have talked about is there should just be a pause on any kind of new action that potentially threatens the reliability of the grid until the electricity crisis is resolved because the electricity crisis is a health crisis that far dwarfs any negative side effects of fossil fuels.

Mr. BURLISON. And with new power demands coming, you know, you mentioned the AI data centers and all of that—what can we do now to prepare and to ramp up quickly?

Mr. EPSTEIN. I mean, I was just sighing because I am, like, listen to people like me 10 years ago. I mean, it is annoying because it was so obvious that shutting down reliable power plants in a world that well could need more reliable electricity was just a disaster.

So, I think what you need to look at is what are the near-term things you can do. I think the most near-term thing you can do, which I did not cover in my testimony, is you want to see how do we increase the already existing capacity of coal plants and natural gas plants which, particularly with the coal plants, is being drastically underutilized due to a lot of irrational emissions regulations.

Like, rather, coal and gas have real capacity. Solar and wind have fake capacity. It is not a capacity if you can go to near zero at any given time when the weather changes.

So, you need to increase the utilization of our real capacity, and happy to share more details on how to do that.

Mr. BURLISON. Thank you.

Ms. Gunasekara, as the Chief, you know, the former Chief of Staff of EPA, you had a unique perspective on how Federal agencies work or do not work. When thinking about the role of the Federal Government and how it has an encouraging economic growth how do the regulations stand in the way of that economic growth?

Ms. GUNASEKARA. Yes, I think what we saw in the last Administration was putting their thumb on the scale against traditional energy resources, coal, oil and natural gas, that, again, provide the bulk of our daily energy needs and then also provide that important base load generation that I referenced earlier. When you have over-regulation it increases costs, it increases litigation opportunities, and that equates to uncertainty throughout various industries that are necessary for us to live out our daily modern life.

So, really paring back various regulations that have either skewed from EPA's actual mission, which is to protect the environment, improve efficiencies, not put certain businesses out of business, to get away from that, to comport with the law and ensure that there is stability and certainty going forward for those that want to make the investments we need to meet this future growth in energy demand.

Mr. BURLISON. Thank you.

And, Mr. Herrgott, what recommendations do you have to address the problems in the current permitting system and what is at stake if we do not?

Mr. HERRGOTT. As an example, as much as the IRA is touted as a marquee accomplishment of the last Administration there were 195 new regulations.

Forty-five gigs of wind, solar transmission, and others that would have provided for the green energy revolution are either abandoned or will never get built.

So, the reality is when capital is put at risk we remove the obstacles and build it well within a year. We can do that. Countries far greener than ours in Europe do it in half the time that we do it without any compromises to environmental or social or cultural protections.

We are in the modern age. We are relying on 50-year-old rules on how we build infrastructure and if we continue on this pathway of not realizing that there is a balance between human activity and the natural environment.

If you want a car you are going to need a road. If you want to turn on your lights you are going to need a transmission line.

If you are not going to build the renewable energy you need to rely on the other stuff. At some point, there is—electricity is not a public good. At some point it has to get built and the government is not going to build it. The private sector is.

We have got to remove the hurdles and we also need to look at opportunities to potentially outsource engineering and architecture firms to address the significant backload of projects that are moving through the system with a Federal workforce that is not capable to deal with the complexity of the projects of today.

Mr. BURLISON. Thank you.

I now recognize Mr. Frost for 5 minutes of questions.

Mr. FROST. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Herrgott, how can home solar and home energy storage contribute to Americans' energy needs and grid resilience?

Mr. HERRGOTT. So, it can play a role as an intermittent source to offset the cost of energy or to provide at some points a payback of distributed generation back to the utilities.

But on average—but on average—it is not going to make a dramatic difference in particular with the 20 percent load growth that we are going to see year over year.

It almost becomes a least economical way to put the solar panels on a house with the transmission that would then have to reverse back into the utility.

There is a far better way to address if the goal is for zero carbon emission projects. There is a far more efficient way to do it. We have to stop pretending that these things that are of a smaller scale are somehow going to address a larger problem.

Mr. FROST. And how can energy resilience programs for single family homes contribute to people keeping their lights on during extreme weather?

This is, you know, this is a big deal in the state of Florida as well and part of the reason why it is a pretty bipartisan issue. We have seen on home rooftop solar and people wanting to become energy independent within their own home.

Mr. HERRGOTT. So, the cost of energy is oftentimes and the cost of these 20 to 30 percent it takes to build a project is often passed down to the rate payer.

It becomes this intangible cost that is spread over many rate payers, so we do not see that the kilowatt per hour goes up a half a cent a year or half a cent a month.

Because we are not transparent about how that project actually gets from generation to the house the cost increase is because—you know, to give you an example, there were five to six large-scale renewable transmission lines that were almost permitted at the end of the Trump Administration, and I can—Cardinal-Hickory Creek, 10 West, and many others that still took another 3 to 4 years.

If we cannot build the infrastructure, if we cannot build the new KV lines to get from 115 to 230 to 530 that actually reduce cost and efficiencies, then what are we doing here?

Mr. FROST. Dr. Cleetus, as the only economist among our witnesses today, how confident are you in Trump's promise to cut energy costs in half in the next 500 days?

Ms. CLEETUS. If that promise is predicated on what we have seen in the last month I fear not at all. That promise will not be met and, unfortunately, in the interim many people around the country are going to suffer from higher energy costs, lost jobs, businesses suffering from uncertainty in the marketplace.

This is actually really taking the economy in the wrong direction. So, I hope there will be a reversal of some of those early day announcements.

Mr. FROST. Yes. And I want to get an idea of how abandoning our clean energy future will actually mean higher bills for folks. I mean, No. 1, there is nothing worse for your banking health than completely losing your job and a lot of these executive orders are aiming to abandon clean energy investments and projects.

I actually, you know, agree with what Mr. Herrgott said as well in terms of if we have already made this investment to begin something when we abandon it, you know, I would say we are misusing a lot of taxpayer money and we are not going in the direction we need to go into.

But abandoning these clean energy investment means that Americans are going to lose their jobs, and I have spoken with trades, really around the country but especially in my district, people who are at work right now because of these investments we have made.

How could that harm America's clean energy leadership, moving forward?

Ms. CLEETUS. The reality is we are on the cusp of what could have been an incredible evolution and we can still capture that bright future if we continue to make these investments.

The Inflation Reduction Act has only been a couple of years into implementation and already we have seen hundreds of thousands of jobs, so many manufacturing facilities in the southeast, all around the country.

That is an incredible opportunity for the communities that live there and that is why there is bipartisan support. We have seen letters sent to the Speaker from the Republican side as well saying, please do not stop these investments because they are helping drive jobs and innovation.

When we look at the world of the future, it is moving toward a clean energy world. The U.S. should be at the forefront of that technological revolution. Let us not cut ourselves out.

Mr. FROST. What states would be mostly impacted?

Ms. CLEETUS. Well, if we look at the states that are getting the investments right now, they are places like Alabama. They are places like Kentucky.

They are places in the southeast that are getting they are getting on a percentage basis a much greater amount of these investments. They have built battery plants. They have built EV manufacturing.

So, these clean energy jobs are everywhere in the country but some parts of the country had been lagging and they are now getting a chance to take advantage of this incredible opportunity.

Mr. FROST. Yes, I appreciate you bringing it up. I mean, and globally, you know, in terms of being a global player we get most of our energy from oil and part of the purpose of moving toward this new green economy and clean energy, of course, is cutting emissions because of the climate crisis but also having more diversity in our energy mix, which is important for resiliency as well and lowering costs.

So, thank you so much. I yield back.

Mr. BURLISON. Thank you. I now recognize the gentleman from Alabama, Mr. Palmer for 5 minutes.

Mr. PALMER. In regard to the cost of renewables versus hydrocarbon resources, I just want to point out that the Economist magazine reported that between November 2022 and February 2023 they estimate there were 140,000-plus excess winter deaths because these people just could not afford to adequately heat their homes, and as Mr. Epstein pointed out there are more people who die from cold-related illnesses than from heat.

So, while there are people out there that are trying to save the planet with misguided energy policies that undermine our national security China is working every day to dominate the planet.

Mr. Epstein, can we compete with China in the development and utilization of artificial intelligence with renewable power only?

Mr. EPSTEIN. I mean, with renewable power only we cannot compete with Ghana.

Mr. PALMER. Would you agree that we are in a technology arms race with China for dominance in AI and quantum computing?

Mr. EPSTEIN. Yes. I mean, it is so—it is just so scary because—you know, I was writing my book "Fossil Future" in, like, 2020 and this was just so clearly going to happen. So, I had a section on AI, you know, way back then and it is just—this is clearly an existential thing.

I am going to use these technologies so much in my own work already and they are just so driven by the ability to have on demand cheap power, to the point where Larry Fink, who is the leader of this disastrous net zero movement, has publicly said at the World Economic Forum that we need more natural gas and that solar and wind will not cut it. Even that guy is admitting this.

So, we need to wake up and live in reality and it is a scary reality if we do not dramatically change our practices.

Mr. PALMER. People should read the book Henry Kissinger, Eric Schmidt, and I forget the other guy's name wrote "Genesis" about

the race for dominance in artificial intelligence, and the bottom line is is that it is going to require enormous amounts of power, and while China is building some renewables, they are really focused on hydrocarbon coal-based power generation.

They are building it at an unprecedented pace, and they are also advancing in small modular nuclear where we are not, and this is the existential threat to the United States. It is also a threat to our economy.

Ms. Gunasekara, would you agree with that?

Ms. GUNASEKARA. Yes, I would, and I would say one of the biggest issues with China's approach versus the U.S. is the coal plants that they are building are not using pollution control equipment that our coal facilities have been using for decades.

So, while we stand by and sign pieces of paper with them, pretending like they are going to do something to lower their emissions, they continue on this trajectory, build these plants that actually ship particulate matter and things along those lines over to places like California that continue to struggle with meeting air quality standards from the early 2000s as a result.

Mr. PALMER. Yes. I worked for two international engineering companies. I worked for Combustion Engineering and their environmental systems and we were leading in making major advances in air pollution control for coal-fired, for natural gas.

But China is not the least bit confused about what the objective is. I think ensuring that we maximize our access to high energy density, and that is what we are talking about when we are talking about hydrocarbon and nuclear resources for power generation is not just an economic issue. It is a national security issue, and would you agree with that?

Mr. EPSTEIN. Yes. I mean, so if you look at national security what does national security depend on? It depends above all on having an extremely robust economy that can produce weapons when necessary, that can keep people alive when necessary. That is No. 1.

The other, No. 2, is it relies on mobility. World War I and World War II were noncoincidentally won by the side with the most oil, and perhaps No. 3 is going to be intelligence or augmented intelligence.

So, all of these things totally depend on unleashing energy and I believe in all forms of energy being free to compete. But the idea that we are going to restrict fossil fuels and subsidize things that cannot compete on their own and that is going to be anything but a disaster has been proven false.

Mr. PALMER. The world is waking up to this.

Mr. EPSTEIN. Yes, and just everyone here needs to wake up to this today. Like, the arguments I am hearing, like, I heard these in, you know, 2013 when people were claiming Germany was going to be success story.

Mr. PALMER. Yes.

Mr. EPSTEIN. I was right back then but it is obvious now.

Mr. PALMER. Well, I had a conversation with Eric Schmidt about his book and he has gone the same direction that Mr. Fink went. He now says full-blown, full speed ahead on hydrocarbon and nuclear.

The bottom line is that our economic and national security are inseparably linked and dependent on reliable, affordable, and sufficient power to meet our needs and to compete with China.

I yield back.

Mr. BURLISON. I now recognize the gentleman from California, Mr. Khanna, for 5 minutes.

Mr. KHANNA. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Gunasekara, welcome back to the Committee. You are the author of the book "You All Are Fired," correct?

Ms. GUNASEKARA. "Y'all Fired."

Mr. KHANNA. "Y'all Fired." I will not get the pronunciation perfect. And when you testified before our committee last September you said, if I remember, you supported Project 2025's calls to fire thousands of Federal workers, correct?

Ms. GUNASEKARA. Yes.

Mr. KHANNA. And it looks like your wishes are coming true, correct?

Ms. GUNASEKARA. Yes. Certainly, some of the policies that I have suggested in the past seem to be being implemented in this Administration.

Mr. KHANNA. Do you support the firing of the 2,400 Veteran Affairs employees, many of whom were doctors, nurses and veterans themselves, that have taken place?

Ms. GUNASEKARA. Again, I think that if people are in roles that do not substantially contribute to fulfilling the mission of the stated agency that from a taxpayer resource perspective those jobs should not continue to exist.

Mr. KHANNA. I understand your general view but in terms of the specifics I am sure you follow them. Do you support the firings that have taken place at the Veterans Affairs Department?

Ms. GUNASEKARA. I think the view that many of the firings that have taken place are from what I just described, that it is looking at roles and are they meaningfully contributing to fulfilling the agency's relative mission and if they are not then those people fall away.

Mr. KHANNA. And so, you support them or I am just trying to understand.

Ms. GUNASEKARA. Yes, I do. I support the structural changes of this Administration. I think it is long overdue. It is actually a breath of fresh air.

Mr. KHANNA. Several of the veterans who have been fired said that they were doing incredibly meaningful work helping veterans who are struggling with depression. One of them yesterday talked about how he was in Iraq and Afghanistan.

I just want to make sure I understand your position. So, there are 2,400 veterans who have been fired. You support that.

What do you think of firing the Agriculture Department workers who are trying to combat the bird flu crisis? Do you support that, or do you think that was a mistake?

Ms. GUNASEKARA. Again, I think all of these structural changes are long overdue. There are many roles throughout the Federal Government that are duplicative and do not meaningfully advance related missions. And so, I think——

Mr. KHANNA. I appreciate the general point that—I even recommend people read your book because I think it is being implemented. But do you support the specifics of the firings of people who were involved with the bird flu or not?

Ms. GUNASEKARA. Yes, I entrust, or I trust, the people who are making these decisions looking at structural reform.

Mr. KHANNA. So, you support that. How about the 350 workers who at the Department of Energy were tasked with safeguarding our nuclear weapons. Do you support those firings, or do you think those were unnecessary or do you believe those were redundant workers?

Ms. GUNASEKARA. I think in many of those instances those are redundant roles, and there are still people that remain fulfilling those key initiatives in every single agency whether it is protecting veterans, whether it is ensuring the safe——

Mr. KHANNA. I appreciate your time. I appreciate two things about you. One, your straightforwardness about what you testified to, your willingness to testify before Congress.

I have said that, you know, Elon Musk and DOGE should come and be as straightforward because you are basically telling the American public that you support the firing of the 2,400 people at the Veterans Department, you support the firing of the 350 employees who are there to protect bird flu.

You see many of them as redundant. You support the firing of the people there to protect our nuclear safety because you see them as redundant, and at least you are being transparent.

Now, do you know if the employees who have been fired so far, the Federal employees, do you have an estimate of how many of them are veterans? I am not trying to trick you. I can give you the number.

Ms. GUNASEKARA. I do not know the number offhand.

Mr. KHANNA. Thirty percent of the Federal employees who have been fired are veterans. Do you think we should give special consideration not to be firing veterans or do you think if someone is a veteran it should not matter?

Ms. GUNASEKARA. I think that there is—I mean, for anyone in the Federal Government that has lost their job—that there are lots of opportunities in the private sector.

Mr. KHANNA. Do you think there should be special protection or special consideration not to fire veterans, people who have gone to Iraq, Afghanistan, worn our uniform or do you think they should be treated like anyone else?

Ms. GUNASEKARA. I think that anyone working in the Federal Government should be treated equally. Again, it is——

Mr. KHANNA. Well, we just disagree. My view is that if someone has been a veteran who served our uniform, I think that, just like we have certain programs to help them get jobs, I think we should take extra care to make sure that we are not firing them.

Have you heard of the Valentine's Day Massacre?

Ms. GUNASEKARA. I have but please remind me.

Mr. KHANNA. That is what—well, that is what the Federal employees, including the veterans, are calling it. Many of them got a note on Valentine's Day that they were going to be fired on Valentine's Day without any prior communication.

If that happened, do you agree that that is the wrong way just from a human level of firing people, just giving them a note on Valentine's Day without any conversation?

Ms. GUNASEKARA. I think there is a lot of people on Valentine's Day that struggle to make ends meet because this Administration and the last—or the last Administration overly focused on hiring and expanding the Federal Government to

Mr. KHANNA. So, you are fine with people getting a note on Valentine's Day, all of them, telling them that they are fired?

Ms. GUNASEKARA. I think when it makes sense for them to get some notice—I mean, I think there is all sorts of ways to develop sob stories for people who have been on the receiving end of an overgrown overbloated Federal Government. But you do not think about all of the rest of the people in the country that have been struggling to make ends meet because when you over-emphasize the growth of the Federal Government you deter the development and opportunities in the private sector.

Mr. KHANNA. Well, I would just encourage you to listen to some of these stories because they were doing incredibly important work. They were high performers. They were fired without any notice, and I am asking for consideration for President Trump to reinstate them, especially our veterans.

Thank you.

Mr. FROST. Mr. Chair?

Mr. BURLISON. Yes?

Mr. FROST. I would like to seek unanimous consent to enter two things into the record.

One is a Yale article and study that says how China became the world's leader on renewable energy. The other one is a *New York Times* article entitled, "Why Trump's clean energy rollbacks could derail a factory boom."

Mr. BURLISON. Both articles will be submitted without objection.

I now recognize the lady from Colorado, Ms. Boebert for 5 minutes.

Ms. BOEBERT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And, Ms. Gunasekara, I just want to commend you so much. Thank you for giving such straightforward answers.

I was not hearing of the outcries from my colleagues on the other side of the aisle when our Keystone XL pipeliners were laid off, when my district was regulated into poverty when oil and gas was pushed out by over regulation and Green New Deal policies.

I did not hear the outcry for veterans or service members who were discharged from the military because they refused to take a trial vaccine that was not, that we did not know the effects of.

I did not hear the outcry for small businesses that went under and were not able to reopen. Many, many, many, many people lost their jobs over poor regulations and over regulations.

So, thank you so much for giving clear and concise answers. We do have an overgrown and bloated government, and DOGE is absolutely exposing that and all of the waste, fraud, or theft, and abuse that is taking place with our American tax dollars.

So, sorry I do not have a question for you but I wanted to just say thank you so much for being here and for your expertise.

Mr. Epstein, we have heard a lot today about bird flu that, obviously, that was under Joe Biden and his decision. We have heard about the Green New Deal.

We heard that America needs to lead on green new energy, really, this green new scam and we kind of cannot when we are dependent on China and we are getting, you know, our solar panels from them and they are using coal-fired energy to create their own energy, and we are kind of left suffering.

Mr. Epstein—Epstein, sorry—are there any myths that you have heard today in this hearing room that you would like to address such as, frankly, some of the BS that I have heard from colleagues here and even one of our witnesses?

Mr. EPSTEIN. So, yes, let me just take—you know, what I think is the overall myth is this idea that we need to impose dramatic restrictions on fossil fuels and give dramatic subsidies to unreliable solar and wind as well as other uncompetitive forms of energy in order to prevent a climate crisis/compete with China. That is sort of the overall thing.

So, just to break it down quickly, I do not know why we have not learned from every other industry that has ever existed but the way you get the best, cheapest, most reliable product is you leave people free to compete.

You do not restrict the things that work and subsidize the things that do not. But we are magically pretending an energy that somehow works. I mean, imagine you outlawed iPhone and Android and just let random people with unreliable phones produce phones and you subsidized them.

It makes no sense. The laws of economics apply here just as well as anywhere else.

In terms of averting an alleged climate crisis, I have documented human beings are so resilient from climate that we are safer than ever from climate. Our resilience is rooted in fossil fuels.

So, if we restrict fossil fuels we make ourselves less resilient. We will reverse what has been an incredible decline in climate-related disaster deaths.

So, one, is there is no climate crisis that, to avert. But then No. 2 is by screwing up American energy you do nothing to reduce global emissions because the emissions just get offshored to China and to more competitive economies, which brings me to China and do we need to compete with them in renewables, and Ranking Member Frost mentioned a certain, quote/unquote, study from Yale about this.

And the issue is China is the leader, is becoming the leader in fossil fuels and one of their leading uses of fossil fuels is to produce overpriced, unreliable energy infrastructure that they sell to us and that we are incredibly dependent upon.

So, the whole thing is wrong and what we need is very simple. We just need energy freedom. So, we need the freedom for all forms of energy to compete.

I think somebody mentioned we need technology neutral standards for our grid. That is very important. We do not want to favor or disfavor any form of energy.

But if we do that, given current economic realities, that is going to mean a lot of fossil fuels here and around the world and overall,

that is really good for people because a world with a lot of energy can handle any climate but a world without much energy cannot handle any climate or really anything else.

Thank you.

Ms. BOEBERT. Mr. Epstein, I want to give you the last 30 seconds or so to talk about the EPA, as you mentioned in your testimony, just things that they need to rescind and do better with in this new Administration.

We have Administrator Lee Zeldin now at the EPA and I think he will do a fantastic job and, hopefully, he has read your books "The Moral Case for Fossil Fuels," "Fossil Future."

Hopefully, he has your Alex AI app. I think that is a great tool for energy information and it is actually reliable kind of like the fossil fuel energy that we are discussing today.

So, if you want to use these last seconds—oh, I used most of them. I am sorry.

Mr. EPSTEIN. Yes. Well, fortunately, it is in my testimony. The quick things I would just say are we need to be objective about the benefits of any of these restrictions, which are generally overblown, and you need to be very realistic about the costs which are usually underestimated.

And Yes, check out AlexEpstein.AI. Free to use for everyone and you could just use it dynamically and learn a lot about this testimony topic.

Thank you.

Ms. BOEBERT. Thank you. I yield back, Mr. Chair.

Mr. BURLISON. Thank you. I now recognize the gentlelady from Arizona, Ms. Ansari.

Ms. ANSARI. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to thank our witnesses for being here today.

I am proud to represent Arizona's Third congressional District, a community of families who have been hit very hard by the cost of rising energy at a time of rapidly increasing energy demand. It is absolutely imperative that we bring down costs and deliver economic security for Americans.

However, I want to be clear. The cost-of-living crisis is not happening because of some imaginary war on oil and gas. The United States is already producing more oil and gas than ever, more than any country in history. Instead of doubling down on fossil fuels we need to prioritize a transition to clean, affordable, American-made energy.

Unlike fossil fuels, which we have seen in recent years, are subject to volatile global markets and price swings. Clean energy provides long-term stability and allows working families to adequately budget for energy costs.

There has been a lot of talk from my colleagues on the other side of the aisle about the need to protect and advance national security. The gravest existential threat to our national security is climate change.

It is laughable, frankly, to hear you say that the climate crisis does not exist. I like to agree with the 99 percent——

Mr. EPSTEIN. Ask me a question and I will explain.

Ms. ANSARI. No, I do not need to hear more explanation on lies. So, it is actually the U.S. military establishment in the 1970s that

first sounded the alarm on climate change and said that climate change is a threat multiplier to our national security.

We have also heard from you about that we should not favor any type of energy, and I do agree with that, but I am wondering why our current President has suspended new Federal offshore wind, saying, "We are not going to do the wind thing," quote, "big, ugly windmills. They ruin your neighborhood."

So, it is just the concept of saying that we should not be going after any one form of energy while our President is doing the exact opposite

Mr. EPSTEIN. I am not the President. I do not agree with that policy.

Ms. ANSARI. So, I am talking about the actions of this Administration.

Mr. EPSTEIN. Well, that specific one I think was incorrect but most of them are good.

Ms. ANSARI. I did not ask you a question, sir. I am sorry, I did not ask you a question.

Mr. EPSTEIN. OK. I thought you were addressing me.

Ms. ANSARI. So, on the Phoenix city council I was proud to pass the city's ambitious climate action plan unanimously, start one of the most ambitious fleet transition plans in the country, all with Republican support.

These initiatives were made possible by legislation such as the Inflation Reduction Act which delivered historic levels of investment in clean energy. Arizona has gained over 18,000 clean energy jobs and nearly $12 billion in private investment related to the IRA.

So, with that, I would like to turn to my questions to Dr. Cleetus. Thank you again for being here.

Dr. Cleetus, are we seeing other states benefit from investment in clean energy and what are things that states can do to increase their potential for economic growth?

Ms. CLEETUS. We are seeing the benefits of clean energy all across the country. We have got more than 3 million clean energy jobs already and the Inflation Reduction Act alone has created hundreds of thousands of jobs.

We have seen these benefits, especially in the Southeast but in every state: Nevada, Kentucky, Georgia, Florida. We have seen an incredible growth in manufacturing and jobs in this country.

Now, the opportunity we have is to accelerate that transition, give people even more access to clean energy. We should not be prioritizing the interests of fossil fuel companies and their profits over the interests of the American consumers and the American people.

So, doubling down on fossil fuels, that only serves the fossil fuel industry, so, of course, they are spreading disinformation and misinformation about the climate science.

They have been obstructing action on climate change for decades now but their own scientists were the ones decades ago who said very clearly that burning fossil fuels will drive worsening climate change and we are living in that reality right now.

Ms. ANSARI. Thank you so much. I could not agree more.

Can you tell us a little bit more what would divestment or taking certain energy options off of the table mean for states like Arizona where 61 percent of energy jobs are clean energy jobs?

Ms. CLEETUS. You know, in states like Arizona it is a twofold benefit because not only is it helping deliver clean renewable energy, it is also helping address some of the challenges we face from extreme weather events like heat waves.

Arizona has suffered from incredible intense heat waves that have the clear fingerprints of climate change on them, and in those conditions solar plus storage is really delivering around the country, also in Texas. Many states have seen this.

When you have these extreme pressures on the grid what can you bring online quickly and deliver reliably is not natural gas. It is solar plus storage, again and again, and the data show it.

Ms. ANSARI. And finally, my colleagues across the aisle frequently claim that clean or renewable energy is less reliable than energy powered by fossil fuels despite numerous studies showing that fossil fuel-fired plants are becoming increasingly unreliable.

Dr. Cleetus, can you comment on the reliability of clean energy versus fossil fuels?

Ms. CLEETUS. The clean energy flexible modern system that we are talking about right now is one where you couple renewables with storage. You build transmission so that you have a distributed grid.

You have the opportunity for both micro grids, local generation, as well as long-distance transmission, which we should be building more of. This is the flexible system of the future instead of getting stuck in this antiquated notion of base load.

Meanwhile, we have coal-fired power plants that are retiring because of market factors. Why do we want to put a thumb on the scale and leave consumers saddled with billions of dollars to keep these outdated polluting plants online?

And let us be very clear. Who is paying the costs? We are in health costs. Those costs are not costs that companies are taking into account. They are being socialized to all of us, the asthma, the heart ailments, the lung ailments, the deaths from cancer. That is the consequence of burning fossil fuels.

Ms. ANSARI. Thank you so much. I yield back.

Mr. HIGGINS. [Presiding.] The gentlelady yields. I recognize myself for 5 minutes for questioning.

It has been clear through the course of modern history that economic prosperity is directly related to the availability of affordable, abundant, transportable energy product, and across the world where economic prosperity moves forward, built upon a cornerstone of affordable, reliable, transportable, abundant energy product then the environment is cleansed in an economically enriched community. The air gets cleaner. The water gets cleaner. The land gets cleaner.

So, if our goal is to have a cleaner, more stable environment for our planet then we should embrace the supply of energy product that most clearly reflects those key principles of as clean as possible but abundant and affordable and transportable.

So, if the energy product comes out of the gate as unaffordable and not abundant and unreliable then it does not meet the criteria.

So, this is where my colleagues on both sides of the aisle have contention.

None of us, none of us disagree with our responsibility to preserve our planet. We have a mandate since the dawn of man to nurture and care for our planet and the creatures thereof and we take this responsibility very seriously.

But I would ask the young lady, Ms. Gunasekara, regarding the mission statement of the EPA—you are a former employee of the EPA, correct?

Ms. GUNASEKARA. Yes.

Mr. HIGGINS. And how would you describe in a sentence what is the mission statement of the EPA?

Ms. GUNASEKARA. To protect public health and the environment.

Mr. HIGGINS. Thank you very much.

So, to protect the public health and the environment worldwide is an aspiration, but the mission statement of the Environmental Protection Agency is to protect the environment of the United States, correct?

And we accept the role as the world's energy leader both in consumption and production and in technology that is shared with the entire world.

So, regarding permitting, Mr. Herrgott, what would happen if permitting at the Federal level was streamlined to allow for more aggressive introduction of clean, affordable, reliable, transportable energy product in the United States and worldwide. What would happen in those communities?

Mr. HERRGOTT. So, to make a point—and I know my friends in the press know that I live in the numbers—more wind and solar was built under the Trump Administration than the entire Biden Administration and the last 3 years of the Obama Administration.

We have to look at the facts. All right. The facts are not hyperbole. More than 50 percent of Oklahoma, my home state, or my—I am from Arizona originally, but I worked for Senator Inhofe, who Mandy and I both worked, who we miss greatly, was always a fan of let us make the level playing field for everyone. Remove the obstacles——

Mr. HIGGINS. Respectfully, I have been to Oklahoma. I have toured that grid. I am familiar with it, and I am asking you what would happen if Congress streamlines the permit, and the executive branch streamlines the permitting process for investors that are standing by to invest in clean——

Mr. HERRGOTT. We would see a 20 to 30 percent reduction in project cost, an immediate reduction in the futures market, reduced electricity prices and we

Mr. HIGGINS. Thank you. So, we are talking about hundreds of billions of dollars. Am I correct?

Mr. HERRGOTT. Yes.

Mr. HIGGINS. And we all concur that economic prosperity is a cornerstone of a clean environment. So, if this is our goal then, worldwide, we should support the American energy industry.

Mr. Epstein, you referenced nuclear and I am going to leave with this question here as my time is expiring, and I hope you answer it.

You referenced nuclear in the 1970s and how it was not allowed to emerge fully, that government restrictions sort of stopped the full emergence of nuclear power and I think you made an interesting point there. You stated that we are artificially restricting supply while we are artificially increasing demand.

So if we, if Congress were to allow the full manifestation of the American energy industry what would happen to the supply of that energy product and therefore the expense of that energy product?

Mr. EPSTEIN. I mean, if you truly unleash it—and, again, I give a few dozen things in my written testimony and if people go to EnergyTalkingPoints.com we have, like, 110 new proposals, 112—you know, it would just be the greatest increase in prosperity.

I mean, you might actually have a shot for new electricity, reducing the price by 50 percent. But it really requires dramatic things.

With nuclear in particular that is really important and I should say, by the way, the number-one organization probably that ruined nuclear was the Union of Concerned Scientists, which we have a witness from today that they deserve a special place in blame.

Mr. HIGGINS. I thank the gentleman and my time has long expired. So, out of respect for my colleagues I am going to close my questioning and move to the gentleman Mr. Min, Representative Min from California. Thank you, sir.

Mr. MIN. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

And I see that we are on the Oversight Committee. We are exploring oversight. That seems to be a topic we are, largely ignoring, but I will get back to that in a moment.

A lot of discussion around energy policy and climate change and so I guess my question is for each of you, do you have a degree in science?

Let us start with you, Mr. Epstein, a Ph.D., master's?

Mr. EPSTEIN. No. Believe it or not, you can be a self-taught expert.

Mr. MIN. Yes or no. Yes or no question, sir.

Mr. EPSTEIN. It is not quite a valid question.

Mr. MIN. Ms. Gunasekara, do you have a degree in science?

Ms. GUNASEKARA. No.

Mr. MIN. Mr. Herrgott, a degree in science, undergrad, MBA or master's?

Mr. HERRGOTT. No, but I am a nerd.

Mr. MIN. OK. How about yourself, Doctor? I guess you are a scientist. What was your degree in?

Ms. CLEETUS. Economics. Social science.

Mr. EPSTEIN. That is not a science.

Mr. MIN. You are not a climate scientist then?

Ms. CLEETUS. Not a climate scientist, a social scientist.

Mr. MIN. OK. Interesting. So, I am not a scientist either. I am a lawyer. I am self-taught as well, but I work with a lot of scientists at UC Irvine.

I have talked to a lot of scientists around climate, around oceans, and our atmosphere and I think there is clearly a consensus that the burning of fossil fuels by emitting carbon into our atmosphere is causing dramatic changes in our environment.

The science on this is fairly undisputed at this point other than a handful of people on the extremes. I think every credible scientist agrees with this.

We are seeing effects of this right now. Extreme weather events, 140-degree temperatures in India last year, highest ever in recorded history.

And the thing is I think if we listen to the scientists—I know scientists are a little out of style today—that in a hundred years we are going to look back and say that the weather today the temperatures were uniquely cool and the weather patterns were uniquely benign.

And so, I will just make an observation that I think we have a moral imperative to think about the future that we are creating for our children, grandchildren, and beyond.

I will also say that, you know, I know there is a lot of talk about economics here but that we should be thinking about the external costs, negative externalities of burning fossil fuels.

That is something that we know is not factored into the cost of oil. When we pay for gas at the gas pump, we are not paying for the cost that these impose over time on our society, and I think these costs are conservatively estimated in the tens of trillions of dollars to our society.

But I want to take this back to the question of oversight because last May Donald Trump famously held a meeting with oil executives that was organized by the person that then became the Secretary of Interior where he publicly stated that he would slash regulations on the oil industry if they donated $1 billion to his campaign.

At the time, my kids were asking me, is this not a bribe? It looks like a bribe when somebody running for office promises to do something in exchange for a contribution. I said it does look like a bribe. I do not know how to describe this.

The oil industry, of course, responded with hundreds of millions of dollars in donations both directly to Trump's campaign as well as through different Super PACs and other vehicles that were created by Citizens United and now, of course, we have congressional Republicans pushing forward an agenda to try to deregulate oil.

Now, I have had thousands of constituents call my office to say we need to stop this. This is bribery. This is House Republicans pushing pay to play policies.

I have a question to you and I guess I will direct this to Dr—I am sorry, I missed your name—Dr. Cleetus.

Ms. CLEETUS. Dr. Cleetus. Thank you.

Mr. MIN. What, how am I supposed to respond to my kids? How am I supposed to respond to my constituents who say that this is institutionalized bribery, that there is no oversight happening right now of this carrying out of pay to play policies?

Ms. CLEETUS. You know, it is really disturbing to see the Administration's appointees, many of whom are directly connected to the fossil fuel industry or are climate science deniers.

As you said, the science is nonpartisan. It is universally accepted that human-caused climate change is being driven by burning fossil fuels. As an economist, I can tell you it is already having a significant impact on the U.S. economy.

You just need to look at the insurance crisis, the pending crisis to real estate that is exposed to extreme weather and climate-related events, the labor productivity impacts of extreme heat waves. The economic fingerprints of climate change are also clear.

So, in this context——

Mr. MIN. And I know—just reclaiming my time—sorry to interrupt, Doctor. I would just point out that there are lots of jobs being created around the world right now and is it the case that China and Germany and other countries are investing heavily in clean energy right now?

Ms. CLEETUS. They are.

Mr. MIN. And do you see that as the future of, say, jobs and innovation?

Ms. CLEETUS. It absolutely is.

Mr. MIN. So, we are moving away from that and this happens to follow a promise made by then-candidate Trump to slash regulations on oil in exchange for $1 billion and I just want to make that point because a lot of folks out there are questioning why we are doing this in the aftermath of Donald Trump making that promise, and there is no oversight of that promise.

There was none last year, there is none right now, of what looks very blatantly like it is a criminal activity of promising something in return for a campaign contribution, which we all know is illegal.

If I did that I would rightly be charged. But there was no oversight. There continues to be no oversight over that particular exchange.

With that, I yield back.

Mr. BURLISON. [Presiding.] Thank you.

The gentleman from Pennsylvania, Mr. Perry is recognized.

Mr. PERRY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And I am not a scientist either and I do not even talk to a lot of scientists, but I took science and so for Mr. Epstein, is science consensus? Because I never was taught that. So, I am just looking for what is science consensus?

Mr. EPSTEIN. Actually, consensus has a value in science. Ultimately, it is about who can prove the truth. But I know my representative Dave Min is leaving right now but maybe he will listen to this later.

I live in Laguna Beach. I am one of his constituents, too. So, what you really need is you need science combined with other fields.

So, to determine if we have a climate crisis you need to know climate science, adaptation, economics, et cetera, and if you look at the macro data, we are safer than ever from climate disasters and the No. 1 climate related killer is cold.

So, we are not in a warming crisis, even though we are I believe changing climate. Climate change does not equal climate catastrophe and that is ultimately an issue of philosophy and methodology, not an issue of science.

Mr. PERRY. So, and is there proof? They always talk about the proof. There is proof that the use of traditional fuels is costing and they come up, he said trillions of dollars as a conservative estimate. Is there any empirical data to support that claim whatsoever?

Mr. EPSTEIN. He said yes. I am going to ask my representative for a meeting soon to tell him some stuff on, share some facts about this. He said, conservatively it is tens of trillions, I think, a year. OK. So, the global economy is $100 trillion so we are just losing, like, a third of our wealth.

So, what is actually happening is cheap energy is driving incredible well being, increases in life expectancy, resiliency, et cetera, et cetera, and the externalities point the positive externalities far, far outweigh the negative externalities, which is why every metric of human life is getting better.

People who focus on negative externalities are what I call fossil fuel benefit deniers. Happy to give Dr. Cleetus, Representative Min, anyone else, a copy of my book "Fossil Future."

Chapter four in particular explains the pseudoscience of only looking at negative externalities. So, the positive externalities are amazing. The overall impacts are amazingly positive and will continue to be so.

Mr. PERRY. So, this might get a little wonky, but if you could make it simple for people like me and everybody else that is not a scientist.

We are living in, I think, the second lowest atmospheric carbon content in Earth's history. Not in man's history, but in Earth's history. I think we are in the second lowest point of atmospheric carbon in the Earth's history.

Can you discuss what the effects—first of all, is carbon pollution or is it, like, plant food? Is carbon pollution and how did the effects—I am from Pennsylvania and in Pennsylvania we talk about a thing called RGGI, the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative.

Can you discuss the effects of how that initiative would—what these effects would be on the energy market on prices and availability of energy?

Mr. EPSTEIN. Sure. So, when you are talking about a low point of carbon it is all depending on your time scale because if you took it year by year we were at a high point in CO2 in the atmosphere for the last 150 years.

But if you look at a scale, like, 100 million years it is a different kind of thing. So, in general, compared to the Earth's history we are at a low point and we have had mammals and our descendants and stuff like that exist at much higher levels of CO2 and thrive.

My argument is we can thrive at almost any conceivable level of CO2 that has existed. We can thrive at a wide variety of temperatures. The only concern is just are you, is the rate of change so much that you are just changing the infrastructure too quickly.

Unfortunately, with sea levels, which would be the biggest concern, they are currently rising at one foot a century and extreme projections are three feet a century. So, we just do not have any catastrophically disruptive rate of change.

So, this idea that change equals catastrophe is an anti-human idea that denies our ability to adapt and master our surroundings and also just treats anything we cause as bad because we caused it.

Now, in terms of how this manifests in RGGI and other policies, basically, RGGI is a dressed-up carbon tax, right? It means you are

forcing people to pay more money for electricity in particular. That involves CO2.

So, what you do is you take the cheapest form of electricity, which is not being out competed. You make it more expensive that means energy is more expensive. That means everything is more expensive. That means your region is less able to compete.

And if I may, just I want to make one comment about the jobs because that is the only thing I have not refuted yet. It is a total trash argument that this is creating all these miraculous jobs.

It is not creating any net new jobs. It is creating welfare work. It is creating jobs that are uneconomic, uncompetitive. To follow Milton Friedman, why do we not just pay a bunch of people to scoop dirt with spoons out of the ground? That will create jobs, too.

What we want is productive jobs and the way we get productive jobs is we liberate the economy so that we get the most productive jobs possible.

So, this does not create any new good jobs. It is creating a bunch of welfare work and Congress should send a signal to all the subsidy seekers that, hey, it is not safe to create fake businesses based on subsidies.

We want real businesses. So, if we take the subsidies away that is a great lesson to the American economy to not be subsidy seekers and to be real value creators.

Mr. PERRY. I yield the balance.

Mr. BURLISON. Thank you. I now recognize Ranking Member Frost for his closing remarks.

Mr. FROST. Thank you so much. Thank you for, thank you to everyone for being here today.

Look, I think we have heard a lot of interesting opinions throughout this hearing but what we know to be true is that we are facing a devastating climate crisis. It is not hypothetical.

It is also not something I have read about but it is something I have experienced being in the state of Florida.

And, look, I think the topic of this hearing is important—energy reliability and resilience—but I got to say that having a Project 2025 author and then having a guy that I would say is pretty much a conspiracy theorist calling climate change a hoax and——

Mr. EPSTEIN. I did not say that.

Mr. FROST [continuing]. False and pseudoscience. I did not ask you a question.

Mr. EPSTEIN. But you did tell a lie about me.

Mr. FROST. I did not ask you a question.

Calling climate change pseudoscience despite the scientific consensus being that the climate crisis is real and we are impacting it, I think, is not helpful for the topic of this hearing.

And so, you know, I hope as we move forward we can have, I definitely learned a lot from our other two witnesses. I do think that there is room for bipartisanship on resiliency but, unfortunately, I think a lot of this hearing was spent listening to baseless opinions that are not based on scientific fact or from any real experts on that.

And I do think that is important that as we look at the actions of this Administration we hold in line, No. 1, the promise that the President made to American families across the country that our

costs would come down we do not think that is going to happen, and No. 2, the fact that we have already begun marching toward this new green economy that is going to create tons of good-paying jobs, that is going to help us protect our planet, that is going to help spur business across the country, especially a lot of small businesses in my district in Orlando, and completely reversing that is a waste of taxpayer money.

I agree that there is ways that we can do this in a better way but completely abandoning this for political purposes, I think, is the wrong thing to do.

And to put the cherry on the top, the reason is to completely continue to put more money into big polluters, and as we know their profits are at an all-time high and our costs are high.

And so, you know, my hope is as we continue here we can really dig into bipartisan solutions and stay away from conspiracy theories and climate denying.

Thank you. I yield back.

Mr. BURLISON. Thank you. I now recognize myself for closing remarks.

I just want to say thank you very much for our expert witnesses for coming today. I believe that we had a robust debate on policy. I am glad that we stuck to the debate.

This hearing has helped identify tangible ways in which Congress and the Trump Administration can promote strong, reliable and inexpensive energy for the American people.

The previous Administration left the American people on the edge of an energy cliff, and power shortfalls are a very real possibility if we do not address the many issues impacting our power generation and electric grid.

In 2023, the North American Electric Reliability Corporation's annual risk assessment included energy policy as one of the leading threats to electric reliability for the first time ever.

The 2024 assessment found that many regions of the country had a likelihood of experiencing resource adequacy shortfalls in the coming years.

This is not something to take lightly and there are a growing number of threats that need to be tackled quickly in the coming years. Just yesterday Chile experienced a massive power blackout due to a transmission line failure, leaving millions of its citizens in the dark and disrupting critical infrastructure and functions for daily life.

Events of this size and scale are alarming because they remind us that this can happen anywhere. Grid operators have sounded the alarms for years of what is to come and if we do not address the challenges impacting both power generation and our aging transmission infrastructure.

We already know what works and overreaching government must get out of the way when it comes to energy policy and regulations. For far too long red tape and permitting hurdles have strangled the American energy sector and the infrastructure that supports this industry.

The Trump Administration understands the importance of letting the private sector lead and has already begun removing some of the unnecessary barriers to unleash new investment.

Power demand is increasing. As the AI race and AI dominance spawns new demand for data centers across the country the need for cheap, reliable energy will only grow.

We can match that need and provide even more power generation through reforming regulations for the power sector including nuclear power, which is one of the cleanest forms of power available.

Congress and the new Administration can take advantage of the abundant resources our Nation possesses, utilizing reliable fuel sources to keep the lights on while we develop new, innovative solutions that we can rely on in the future.

And once again, I want to thank each and every one of our witnesses for being here today, for their insights in important issues.

And with that, without objection all Members will have five legislative days within which to submit materials to this and to submit additional written questions for the witnesses, which will be forwarded to the witnesses for their response.

If there is no further business, without objection the Subcommittee stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:04 a.m., the Subcommittee was adjourned.]