

**Committee on Energy and Commerce**  
**Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery**  
**of**  
**Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr.**

*Hearing on “Examining Emerging Threats to Electric Energy Infrastructure”*

**July 18, 2023**

Our nation’s energy grid is critical infrastructure that we rely on every day in virtually every aspect of our lives. We depend on it for the production, transmission, and delivery of electricity and we expect that every time we flip the switch that our lights will turn on and that we can cool or heat our homes, including during extreme weather events. Today, the Subcommittee is examining threats to our electric energy infrastructure.

The climate crisis is creating unprecedented challenges and risks that threaten our grid’s integrity. Extreme weather events are happening more frequently and in regions that are not necessarily prepared for them. Earlier this month, we experienced the hottest week in recorded history. The number of days each year when we experience extreme heat has also risen dramatically in just the past few years and is projected to continue rising. Winter storms have also become more extreme and unpredictable and have knocked out power for millions during dangerously cold days. Extremely high or low temperatures significantly strain our energy grid by increasing demand for air conditioning or heat while simultaneously decreasing the overall efficiency of some power plants and grid infrastructure.

Other forms of extreme weather are also straining the grid. Torrential downpours and heavy rainfall have become more common and can cause flooding that can damage grid infrastructure and cause outages.

The critical role that the energy grid plays in our day-to-day lives also makes it a target for bad actors and foreign adversaries. Regardless of how it happens, losing power for any period of time can upend our lives without warning.

Our grid faces threats both from physical attacks and cyberattacks. In recent years, hackers have come close to gaining access to our energy infrastructure. There has also been a disturbing rise in the number of physical attacks on grid substations, and the FBI and the Department of Homeland Security have warned about the increase in white supremacist plots targeting the power grid.

When we are caught unprepared, power outages can have a tragic human cost. That is why the investments Democrats made last Congress are so important. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law invested billions in grid resilience and cybersecurity efforts that will make our grid more secure and resilient in the face of the climate crisis and security threats. These investments are meant to help our grid at every level. For example, the law invests more than \$15 billion to harden and weatherize our energy grid. The Department of Energy has also already

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awarded more than \$300 million in grants to states, tribes, utilities, and other organizations to support grid resilience at the state and local levels.

And we didn't stop there – the Inflation Reduction Act will bolster supply chains, boost domestic manufacturing, and strengthen the critical infrastructure sectors that our grid needs to operate effectively and bounce back quickly after an outage.

These investments also enhance past bipartisan efforts to protect the energy grid and ensure that federal regulators have the tools they need to respond to emerging threats. In 2015, Congress unanimously passed the bipartisan FAST Act in response to brazen attacks on grid substations. This law gave the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) additional flexibility to mount a more robust response to physical security threats. More recently, the Energy Act of 2020 enhanced grid security, efficiency, and reliability through initiatives to accelerate research and deployment of smart grids and other innovative technologies.

This Committee has a long history of working together on grid security and resilience and we must continue that bipartisan work for the American people. Our grid faces a wide range of constantly evolving threats, and the federal government must have the tools needed to meet that challenge. I hope we can work together on these important goals, and I thank the witnesses for being here as we examine where we need to go from here.

Thank you.