Questions for the Record – Tom Fanning

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Rep. Richard Hudson

1. After each disaster we learn lessons about how to improve responses to emergencies at the federal level and how to better assist with state, local, municipal, and private entities. I am curious about one facet and that involves manpower. While we focus on the immediate need for equipment and supplies to be rushed to areas hurt by storms, there is also a need for qualified experts to flow to the region. When I see the massive scope of damage to power lines, for example, I wonder if there are enough linemen and women available to tackle the laborious work needed to rebuild our grid. North Carolina has been a leader in creating high-skilled job-training programs. At both Stanly Community College and Sandhills Community College, the advanced manufacturing programs are the critical training grounds for high-skilled manufacturing workers. In addition, I have worked with my colleagues on several pieces of legislation to address this critical issue. My question to you Mr. Fanning is twofold:

a. Are companies able to find, train, and retain a workforce that can meet not only the daily challenges of operating a grid, but react to a natural disaster? Are we training enough folks at this point?

b. I have heard from some of my utilities that there is also an issue with retirements affecting the workforce. As the current universe of lineworkers age, are we doing what we need to do to have the next generation of experts trained?

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Thank you for your questions Congressman Hudson. The Electricity Subsector Coordinating Council does not endorse legislation, and since I am responding in my capacity as an ESCC co-chair, I won't comment on the legislative aspect of your question. However, I know your bill H.R. 338, promoting a 21st century energy and manufacturing workforce, enjoys support from many stakeholders, including the electric power sector.

More than a decade ago, the electric power industry saw the challenges you've mentioned–a coming wave of retirements, and the need to recruit and retain the future workforce–and formed the Center for Energy Workforce Development (CEWD), a non-profit consortium of electric, natural gas, and nuclear companies and their associations —the American Gas Association (AGA), American Public Power Association (APPA), Edison Electric Institute (EEI), Nuclear Energy Institute (NEI), National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), and Distribution Contractors Association. CEWD has strategic partnerships with many other stakeholders including organized labor, career and technical schools, community colleges, government agencies, and workforce boards. (http://www.cewd.org/)

According to a recent study (http://mjbradley.com/sites/default/files/PoweringAmerica.pdf) conducted for APPA, EEI and NRECA, the electric power industry directly provides nearly 2.7 million jobs nationwide through its employees, contractors and supply chain, and investments. That workforce is responsible for all of the work required to keep the energy grid operating safely and reliably; everything from routine

maintenance and operations to emergency restoration when the power does go out.

Specifically, as it relates to natural disasters, the electric power industry utilizes a voluntary mutual assistance program to restore power following major outages. When an impacted company requires resources that outstrip it's available workforce, it turns to its peers to "borrow" restoration workers. As I noted in my testimony, more than 10,000 electric power industry workers from at least 21 states mobilized to restore power to customers impacted by Hurricane Harvey, and more than 60,000 workers, coming from more than 250 electric companies across the United States and Canada were involved in the restoration following Hurricane Irma.

To your second question on retirements and its impact on the workforce, that was the organizing principle that created CEWD. More than 10 years later, the solutions are in place and that coming wave of retirements is less of a concern. However, you correctly identify the need to train the next generation of grid experts. CEWD is focused on closing the skill gaps for the most critical jobs such as lineworkers, technicians, engineers and plant operators. The industry has put in place a number of solutions, but in particular, I'll mention the work the industry has done to hire more men and women who have served our country. According to the jobs study referenced above, military veteran hiring accounted for more than 10 percent of new hires in the electric power industry as of year-end 2014, the latest year for which data are available.

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