

U.S. Rep. Jerry McNerney
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House Committee on Energy and Commerce
Subcommittee on Energy

Keeping the Lights On: Addressing Cyber Threats to the Grid

OPENING REMARKS

We are meeting today to discuss the state of cybersecurity in the grid and the continuing threats facing America's energy infrastructure.

We continue to see increasing threats to the grid originating both at home and abroad. I'm glad to see DOE, FERC, and others take steps to address the growing dangers posed by nefarious actors.

Our energy grid serves as the backbone of our economy, touching every aspect of our lives. A reliable grid system is also critical for our national security and clean energy future.

For lawmakers to encourage and enable innovative advancements that can improve the security and reliability of our nation's energy grid, we must work on a bipartisan basis and actively engage with industry leaders as we are doing today.

Fortunately, the modernization and innovation of our energy infrastructure is already underway. What was once a one-way delivery system has evolved into a dynamic network where information and energy flow both ways.

Technological advancements are also born from the need to secure the energy grid against potential physical and cyber threats.

For example, technology allowing for the rerouting of power and quick response in the event of attacks is being deployed across the grid. The cooperation among federal, state and local governments is essential to protecting Americans and our nation's infrastructure.

Given today's cyber environment, it is more important than ever that Congress pursue policies that continue to foster these exciting developments and support our grid infrastructure.

This is an issue that I am very passionate about. Any vulnerable component is a threat to our physical and national security, making it imperative that we invest in grid modernization and security.

That is why I am proud to co-chair the bipartisan Grid Innovation Caucus along with my good friend from across the aisle, Representative Latta of Ohio.

Together, we are focused on providing a forum for discussing solutions to the many challenges facing the grid, and to educate Members of Congress and staff about the importance of the electric grid with relation to the economy, energy security, and advanced technologies being utilized to enhance grid capabilities.

This work has informed our introduction of two bills on the topic, both of which have already been marked up and advanced by this subcommittee.

Their aim is to bolster America's electric infrastructure by encouraging coordination between the Department of Energy and electric utilities.

My bill, which I introduced along with Mr. Latta, H.R. 359, the Enhancing Grid Security through Public-Private Partnerships Act, would

create a program to enhance the physical and cyber security of electric utilities through assessing security vulnerabilities, increase cybersecurity training, and data collection. It would also require the Interruption Cost Estimate Calculator – which is used to calculate the return on investment on utility investments – to be updated at least every two years to ensure accurate calculations.

Mr. Latta's bill, which he introduced along with me, H.R. 360, the Cyber Sense Act, makes important headway in protecting our critical grid infrastructure.

The Cyber Sense Act would create a program to identify cyber secure products for the bulk power grid through a testing and verification program.

The bulk power system supports American industry and provides all the benefits of reliable electric power to the American people.

It is essential that we make this system as secure as possible, as cyberattacks pose a serious threat to the electric grid.

Any vulnerable component in our grid is a threat to our security, and this bill will go a long way to strengthening our system.

I thank Mr. Latta for his partnership in these efforts and look forward to continuing to work to ensure a more secure and resilient grid.

I also want to take a moment to mention my support for H.R. 362, the Energy Emergency Leadership Act, sponsored by Chairman Rush and Mr. Walberg. This bill would establish a new DOE Assistant Secretary position with jurisdiction over all energy emergency and security functions related to energy supply, infrastructure, and cybersecurity.

Finally, I want to mention my support for one more bill on this topic, H.R. 370, the Pipeline and LNG Facility Cybersecurity Preparedness Act sponsored by Ranking Member Upton and Mr. Loeb sack. This bill would require the Secretary of Energy to establish a program relating to the physical security and cybersecurity for pipelines and liquefied natural gas facilities.

As the bills I have mentioned show, our committee is uniquely positioned to examine the issues before us today as we work to put America on a path to better securing our electric utility system.

Thank you and I yield back.