

Committee on Energy and Commerce
Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Subcommittee on Energy, Climate, and Grid Security
Ranking Member Diana DeGette

Hearing on “Oversight of FERC: Adhering to a Mission of Affordable and Reliable Energy for America”

June 13, 2023

Thank you, Chairman Duncan, and thank you to the commissioners for being here today.

The work that the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission does each and every day is critical to the United States’ overall energy system. It is the body responsible for overseeing the flow and transmission of oil, gas and electricity across state lines.

It is the body charged with green-lighting new pipelines, hydropower projects and LNG terminals throughout the country.

It is the agency that can bring our nation’s energy system into the 21st century, help lead our clean-energy transition and take on the climate crisis head on – all while ensuring Americans maintain access to the affordable, reliable electricity they need. That is why FERC is so important, and it’s why I’m glad we are having this hearing today.

As our nation’s demand for energy increases in the coming decades – as it’s expected to do – so, too, must our ability to transmit that energy efficiently and effectively across the country. Since the transmission of energy is one of the most important facets of our nation’s overall energy system, one of the most important things that FERC can do now to help us modernize the grid is facilitate the deployment of transmission lines, as needed, throughout the U.S. Every one of you here today knows this. You’ve done the work, the research, the studies and analysis.

You know the regional and interregional issues that must be addressed to increase our transmission capabilities as we make the clean-energy transition. And that’s why FERC is already taking steps to address several much-needed transmission reforms that are necessary to ensure all Americans continue to have access to the reliable electricity they need. It’s working to create a long-term regional transmission planning process. It’s implementing new backstop-transmission siting reforms included in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

And, it’s working to reform the interconnection process to help get electricity generation projects online faster – and ensure that financed and shovel-ready projects are not allowed to

May 11, 2023

Page 2

languish any longer. I applaud FERC for these efforts, and I urge the speedy completion of all these rulemaking efforts.

But let me be clear about one other thing - the interregional transfer capability study required by the debt limit deal in no way prohibits FERC from completing any of these rules – or from working on interregional transmission or minimum transfer capabilities.

Full stop.

Delaying any potential actions by FERC or NERC was not the Congressional intent of that study. And it should, in no way, be construed as such. The timelines as laid out in debt-limit deal are maximums, not minimums.

I would encourage both FERC and NRC to comply with the requirements under the law in a more expeditious manner. If we, as a nation, are going to be successful in making the transition to clean energy, the work that FERC is doing to utilize grid enhancing technologies, like dynamic line ratings, is more important than ever. We must build out more transmission capacity in this country, and we need to take steps now to modernize our grid to get more electricity out of our existing infrastructure.

I would encourage the Commission to continue advancing these important technologies. And I want to encourage it to do so in a way that focusing on addressing environmental justice. It is no secret that our energy system and the pollution it creates disproportionately impacts low-income and disadvantaged communities. As we continue to develop energy infrastructure, we must do so in a way that fully incorporates the voice of those directly impacted by energy infrastructure and its pollution.

Just last week, Ranking Member Pallone and I sent a letter to Chair Phillips urging FERC to incorporate environmental justice into its decision-making process. Let's bring our energy grid into the 21st century, but let's make sure we are doing so in a way that doesn't ignore the most vulnerable among us.

So, thank you again for being here today, and I yield back.