

**Chair Cathy McMorris Rodgers**  
**Opening Statement—Subcommittee on Energy, Climate, and Grid**  
**Security:**  
**“Powered Up: State Utility Regulators on the Challenges to**  
**Reliable, Affordable Electricity”**  
**Opening Statement**  
**February 14, 2024**  
*As prepared for delivery*

Good morning.

We cannot say this enough... energy is foundational to everything we do.

And affordable, reliable electricity is the cornerstone of this foundation.

It’s what keeps the lights on, heats our homes, and powers our hospitals and businesses.

Access to electricity over the past century has raised our standard of living... driven technological innovation...and improved the health and wellbeing of all Americans.

We need to continue protecting and building on that legacy.

Sadly, President Biden’s rush-to-green environmental policies and regulatory restrictions are driving up costs and jeopardizing this legacy and our grid reliability.

We’ve seen baseload and firm generation sources driven out or shuttered by radical policies across the country.

These sources are being replaced by less reliable and more expensive weather dependent generation...

...and everyday Americans are paying the price.

In some places, people are paying nearly double the nationwide average for residential electricity prices.

In places like California, this has become such a problem that the state is increasingly having to rely on hydropower from my home state of Washington...

...in order to balance its grid when inconsistent resources like wind and solar can’t produce enough energy to meet demand.

In Texas, an overreliance on these weather-dependent resources has limited the state’s ability to get power to people’s homes during periods of severe weather.

Last winter, several Southern state utilities were unable to get the power resources they needed from neighboring states during a severe cold event... resulting in widespread blackouts during the holidays.

The North American Electric Reliability Corporation continues to warn that two-thirds of the nation is at elevated risk of rationing and forced blackouts during periods when people need power the most.

These real risks and impacts were confirmed by FERC commissioners before this Committee last summer...

...and we heard the same warnings from grid operators during a hearing last Fall.

Their warnings were clear...

... while renewable energy from sources like wind and solar absolutely play a role in America's overall energy mix, they cannot replace reliable baseload sources...

...and accelerating the retirement of baseload sources, without adequate replacements, will only increase the risk of these life-threatening blackouts and continue driving up prices.

Today is an opportunity to hear an important perspective that is too often overlooked by this administration.

We'll hear first-hand from state utility regulators about the challenges they're facing to get affordable, reliable electricity to people.

State public utility commissions have long been responsible for assuring reliable delivery of power at affordable rates.

They review the generation resource planning to be sure that power will be available...

...they review decisions to build electric transmission to determine whether it is necessary...

...and they approve or disapprove of the rate increases that can come with building electric infrastructure.

More and more, utility commissions are confronting policies from their own state legislators to retire baseload generation with no long-term strategy to replace it.

I've seen this in my own State of Washington.

Commissions are also having to contend with the Biden administration's top-down rush-to-green policies that seek to force more premature retirements, driving up costs, and putting more people at risk.

We have a lot of questions regarding how these policies are threatening the reliability of our grid, which is so foundational to our economy and way of life.

Rather than a radical energy transition, we must expand our energy resources through an all-of-the-above strategy.

That's the best way to bring down costs for Americans, who are currently paying more while getting less when it comes to electricity.

An energy expansion will ensure families won't have to worry about rationing energy in the summer or winter months or having to make tough choices about whether to pay the electric bill or buy groceries for their family.

I would like to thank each of you again for being here today and look forward to your testimony.

Thank you and I yield back.