

**Committee on Energy and Commerce**

**Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery**

**of**

**Subcommittee on Energy**

**Ranking Member Kathy Castor**

***Hearing on “Keeping the Lights On: Examining the State of Regional Grid Reliability”***

**March 25, 2025**

I find it absurd that the majority has called a hearing on this important topic of strengthening our electric system, while at the same time, they stand idly by as Elon Musk and the Trump Administration take a sledgehammer to Department of Energy initiatives that strengthen and modernize the grid. The Administration has spent its first few weeks mired in illegal shutdowns of DOE grants, loans and partnerships that make energy safe, reliable and affordable. That includes the illegal firings of the DOE IG tasked with rooting out waste, fraud, and abuse and the scientists who protect our nuclear enterprise.

Meanwhile, the Administration and House Republicans have offered nothing to help hardworking Americans tackle the cost of living including electric bills. In fact, consumers are losing confidence as Republicans instead focus on tax breaks for the wealthy and well-connected and handouts to Big Oil and Gas.

Beware - Canada and Mexico are all major makers of electrical grid components like transformers, circuit breakers and switchgears, which are needed to upgrade our growing grid. Trump's tariffs will make these upgrades more expensive and take even longer, not to mention the direct cost increases that tariffs on electricity will have on northern states.

As part of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, DOE was administering a \$10.5 billion Grid Resilience and Innovation Partnerships (GRIP) to enhance grid flexibility and improve the resilience of the power system against extreme weather.

One GRIP project was a battery installation at an Iron Mountain data center in Virginia that was meant to test the potential to store clean power for backup and grid-support uses. On his first day in office, the President illegally froze that project, as well as \$103 million dollars in grid funding that should be helping my neighbors in Florida.

Growing America's leadership in artificial intelligence requires access to more energy – we will see a doubling of data center electricity capacity by 2030 from projects already under construction. A 1-gigawatt data center would be the single largest energy load in the United States today – and we're planning to build dozens of them.

To support data centers and broader electricity growth, the U.S. Energy Information Association forecasts the U.S. will build 63 GW of new utility-scale capacity this year – 94% of which is zero-carbon.

Gas will not magically solve this challenge. Even for those who decide they want to build new gas plants, if they make that decision today, the plant won't come online before 2030. Next generation

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technologies like advanced geothermal and nuclear power, while incredibly promising, are at least several years away. And here's a fact check of the speech last night: He misleadingly said Biden's administration had "closed more than 100 power plants." According to the Department of Energy, the number of utility-scale electric power plants actually increased by 2,187 during the Biden Administration. (Coal- and petroleum-powered plants decreased, because they don't make economic sense.)

Solar, wind, and batteries are the least expensive, cleanest and fastest ways to add energy to the grid now. They're driving down energy costs now. If we want to lower the cost of energy and we want more reliable energy, then we should be making it easier to build solar, wind and batteries wherever it makes sense to do so. That's why its raising huge red flags that the Trump Administration is unceremoniously halting these grid and power projects.

If Republicans were willing to stand up for the innovative work to modernize the grid that is happening right now, then there are real policies we could work on together.

The real barriers to getting new power online – for data centers, large-scale manufacturing, or just everyday American families – is the limited capacity and disjointedness of our power grid. We need to build more transmission to enable more generation and get more out of our existing grid infrastructure.

My bicameral Advancing GETs Act is a great example of this. The bill would direct FERC to implement shared savings incentives that promote the deployment of grid-enhancing technologies. That could unlock hundreds of gigawatts of clean energy stuck in interconnection queues.

We can also expand the use of new tools, like virtual power plants, which can help manage flexible electricity loads. We should also examine state level proposals that ensure that the costs of serving large loads are paid by the that companies that are vastly increasing load growth, and not shifted to consumers.

The United States faces two options. We can choose to double down on outdated, fossil fuel driven strategies that are more expensive, that are slower to interconnect, and are big polluters. Or we can choose the other option, advancing real policies that deliver cheaper, cleaner, faster power that could benefit everyone.

I yield back.