

Committee on Energy and Commerce

**Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of**

**Subcommittee on Energy
Ranking Member Kathy Castor**

Hearing on “Assuring Abundant, Reliable American Energy to Power Innovation”

April 30, 2025

The United States is facing a real challenge as we grapple with rising electricity demand – driven by data centers, reshoring of manufacturing, and the electrification that will be necessary to combat the climate crisis. This Committee has now held four hearings on this topic – and the message is clear. We must meet the challenge with common sense, reasonable policies that are implemented by a competent Administration.

Unfortunately, many of the bills being discussed today fail to meet that standard. Instead, the Committee has chosen to spend our time debating bills that give FERC unilateral power to force utilities to keep unprofitable, polluting generators like coal plants online – while forcing American families to pay for the costs. Bills that are trying to make it easier to export natural gas to foreign adversaries, which will also raise costs for American consumers. And bills to re-establish a National Coal Council, which the Trump Administration already did three weeks ago.

These bills distract from the fact that my Republican colleagues have no plan to lower energy costs for working families. Surveys report that 73% of Americans are concerned about rising utility bills – a problem that energy experts say will only be worsened by the Trump Administration’s continued attacks on clean energy and support for coal and other fossil fuels. Utility companies in at least 19 states have hiked rates as much as \$40 per month due to Trump’s actions. Earlier this month, Trump officials laid off all the staff running the Low Income Home Energy

Assistance Program, which helps 6 million Americans pay their heating and cooling bills. Instead of standing up for their constituents, Republicans are hard at work crafting a reconciliation bill that would increase energy costs and make Americans less safe, all to provide tax cuts for the wealthy and well-connected. In 2022, Democrats advanced a law that actually unleashed American energy dominance, leading to more than 400,000 new clean energy jobs and over \$422 billion in investments – before President Trump illegally froze much of that funding.

It’s a false choice to imply that we need costlier, dirtier energy sources like coal and natural gas to maintain American competitiveness in artificial intelligence. Listen to NextEra Energy, a leading U.S. energy developer: “we cannot isolate ourselves to just a couple of technologies, like gas and nuclear, which are much more expensive than they’ve ever been and take far longer to build”.

Just do the math. Estimates show that we’ll need 450 gigawatts of new generation by 2030. Small modular nuclear reactors won’t be ready by then. If we forced every coal plant to stay online, we would only add 40 gigawatts. Natural gas can only add another 75 gigawatts. That leaves hundreds of gigawatts of energy still left that must be met by clean energy.

If my Republican colleagues wanted to build a stronger, reliable energy system, they would also stand up to President Trump and Elon Musk's illegal actions to gut the offices that do just that. Musk's DOGE minions have forced out more than 3,500 staffers at DOE - delaying key energy projects and funding owed to American communities. The Office of Clean Energy Deployment, Grid Deployment Office, Office of State and Community Energy Programs, Office of Manufacturing and Energy

Supply Chains, the Loan Programs Office – these offices are set up to modernize the grid, reduce energy demand, and get clean power projects online faster. They've each lost more than half their staff.

Over the past few months, we've heard a clear message from the witnesses before this Committee. Energy developers need certainty to make long-term investments. Right now, they don't even know if Trump's destructive tariffs will be in place next week, let alone in several years when projects come online. Similarly, the politicization of FERC, including President Trump's decision to force out Commissioner Willie Phillips, leads to more uncertainty. If Republicans succeed in repealing the Inflation Reduction Act energy tax credits, private investment will decrease, and it will be harder to meet our load growth challenges.

Before I close, I do want to thank the Chair for including one of my bills in today's hearing: the Expediting Generator Interconnection Procedures Act. My bill directs FERC to make common sense updates to speed up the interconnection process – giving grid operators more flexibility and using proven tools like automation. I believe this Committee can work together to advance policies like this, and I look forward to hearing from our witnesses about real solutions that meet the magnitude of the challenge we face today.

I yield back.