

**Subcommittee on Energy hearing entitled “Building the American Dream: Examining Affordability, Choice, and Security in Appliance and Building Policies.” Additional Questions for the Record for James Steffes, Washington Gas Light**

**The Honorable Randy Weber (R-TX)**

**1. How important is it that the International Energy Conservation Code (the “Code”) be inclusive of natural gas appliances and related infrastructure?**

- A. It is critically important that the International Energy Conservation Code remain inclusive of natural gas appliances and related infrastructure. Energy efficiency and conservation are best achieved with flexibility and choice—allowing families, schools, hospitals, and businesses to select the most efficient and affordable technologies that meet their needs.

Natural gas appliances such as furnaces, water heaters, and cooking equipment are among the most cost-effective and energy-efficient options available. Excluding them from the Code would effectively eliminate a proven, affordable solution for consumers—at a time when electric demand is already surging due to widespread data center development and electrification mandates.

Maintaining a Code inclusive of natural gas appliances and natural gas infrastructure ensures we have a reliable and resilient energy mix, one that allows consumers to leverage their choice to mitigate rising costs and prevents overreliance on a single network – the electricity grid – that is already under significant strain.

**2. Please speak to the critical role that natural gas plays in the states and the nation’s energy portfolio.**

- A. Natural gas is a cornerstone of the American energy portfolio—and for good reason. It provides nearly one-quarter of all U.S. energy, offering affordable, reliable, and dependable service to homes, schools, hospitals, restaurants, and businesses across the country. Natural gas is also critical to national security through powering key federal and state facilities, as well as military operations and sites across the country.

For consumers, it remains three times more affordable than electricity, saving the average household over \$1,100 each year. That affordability keeps energy within reach for working families and small businesses, freeing resources for other essential needs.

Natural gas has helped drive the nation’s emissions reductions, including in the power generation sector. In addition, emissions from distribution systems have fallen 70 percent since 1990, even as demand has grown. And Washington Gas continues to modernize its network and prepare to deliver lower-carbon fuels, including renewable natural gas, supporting new innovations for customers and our communities.

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By preserving a balanced portfolio that includes natural gas, we ensure that our communities have energy that is affordable, reliable, and secure—a combination our customers expect.

**3. Why is natural gas so important in maintaining a resilient electrical grid?**

- A. Natural gas is the backbone of electricity grid resilience and a key piece of today’s energy reliability. It supports the electricity grid in three ways:

First, natural gas fuels affordable and reliable power production, supporting economic growth and meeting the needs of homes and businesses across the nation.

Second, natural gas provides a complementary supply portfolio to allow grid operators to integrate additional wind and solar energy. Natural gas fueled generation provides the quick-ramping capacity to our electricity grid to keep the lights on during peak demand or sudden weather events.

Third, natural gas provides energy continuity during outages. Unlike most of today’s electricity grid, which can be disrupted by storms due to its above-ground nature, natural-gas pipelines have more protection given their underground facilities and can therefore deliver energy reliably in all conditions. Washington Gas provides better than 99 percent reliability to its customers. Moreover, reliability is continuing to be improved as Washington Gas continues to invest hundreds of millions of dollars annually to modernize its network. That investment ensures the natural gas network, and the broader energy system remain strong, especially as electricity demand continues to grow.

By sustaining a robust natural-gas system, we strengthen—not undermine—the reliability, resiliency and security of our region’s overall energy capability.