Committee on Energy and Commerce

Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Subcommittee on Energy Ranking Member Kathy Castor

Hearing on "The Fiscal Year 2027 Department of Energy Budget"

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Since President Trump took office, household electric bills have risen as much as 13% nationally. Last year, utilities requested $31 billion in electricity bill rate hikes. American families have already paid more than $1,700 in tariff costs since Trump took office. Now, thanks the President's choice to start an illegal war with Iran, each American household has already paid about $129 in higher gas and diesel prices.

That's before the Republicans' Big Ugly Bill, which will raise electricity prices by 61% over the next decade. Instead of deploying cheap, renewable energy, Republicans decided to take away the tax credits that were helping working families save money on rooftop solar, electric vehicles, and energy efficient home improvements.

At a time of skyrocketing energy demand, the Trump Administration is doubling down on expensive, dirty coal plants – forcing them to stay online against the wishes of utilities, state regulators, and grid operators who have planed for their retirement. Again, it's hardworking American families who have already paid hundreds of millions of dollars for this policy.

Democrats had prepared us for this moment – we deployed tax credits and grants to help build new energy across the country. But last year, the Department of Energy announced it was killing $8 billion worth of grants to over 300 energy projects.

Apparently, just in the last week or so, the Department of Energy has revived a number of projects. But the American people could not afford a one year delay. Many of these projects will now cost more money or won't happen at all because of inflation caused by this Administration's policies.

This is President Trump's energy crisis. And this is the context for the President's proposed FY27 budget. When you put aside the funding for the National Nuclear Security Administration, this is an 11% cut in DOE discretionary funding. It cuts $15 billion in funding from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law – even for funding that my Republican colleagues say they care about, like critical minerals, geothermal energy, and hydropower.

As usual, the only thing that the Administration reliably supports is their Big Oil and Gas donors. The President's budget proposes $23 million to subsidize the dying coal industry. And it requests $1.94 billion for a new Baseload Power account – to preserve coal, oil, and gas industries.

Witnesses have come before this committee over and over telling us that electricity demand is surging, extreme weather is threatening grid infrastructure, and the U.S. power system is aging and vulnerable. But this budget cuts funding for the Office of Electricity by 22%, and the Office if Cybersecurity, Energy Security, and Emergency Response by 16%.

At best, the policy priorities in the budget are incoherent. At worst, they pose real risks for U.S. energy reliability and resilience. DOE lost over 3,000 staff last year and now faces a historic labor shortage – calling into question how it can disburse Congressionally mandated funds. Rather than address that, the President's budget request proposes to give new power to political appointees, making them "the last word on grant announcements and awards". This opens the door to more corruption and grift that has become a hallmark of the Trump Administration.

This budget does nothing for hardworking American families – in fact, it actively hurts them. It eliminates the Weatherization Assistance Program – which this Committee voted unanimously to reauthorize last year.

It's a budget that will leave put the United States further behind our competitors in the global energy race, while leaving Americans poorer and less safe.

I really hope that my Republican colleagues will join us in developing a real budget that funds the bipartisan programs and priorities they previously voted for. Our neighbors back home deserve better than this.

I yield back.