

Committee on Energy and Commerce
Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Full Committee Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr.

Hearing on “Wires, Rates, and States: Permitting Transmission for Affordable, Reliable Power”

May 13, 2026

We are here today to talk about affordable and reliable power – something that has been seriously lacking since President Trump was inaugurated for his second term. I’m sure we all remember Trump’s promise that he would cut electricity bills in half in his first year. Well, 2025 has passed and electricity prices have risen by as much as thirteen percent, and they are not likely to go down as a result of the Republicans’ Big Ugly Bill, which is expected to increase prices by another 60 percent.

Just yesterday, new inflation data showed that overall energy prices are up nearly 18 percent over the last year. Republicans have spent the last few months scrambling to blame anyone but themselves for skyrocketing energy prices.

Here’s the truth: Republicans are threatening the reliability and affordability of our nation’s power grid, and we have to find a way to fix it.

The reality is that we are simply not expanding our grid quickly enough. In an era of rapidly increasing power demand, a critical way to keep power affordable for Americans is to build. Yes, we need to build new power plants, but we also need to ensure that the electricity from those power plants can actually move around the country to where it’s needed. If we don’t have a big enough grid, we can build all the generation we want, but we simply won’t be able to actually power anything with it.

During Winter Storm Fern earlier this year, there was ample available power in the Great Plains, but it physically could NOT move to areas in need of power because of grid constraints. This led to price spikes in the Mid-Atlantic, Southwest, and Texas that could have been avoided if we had a more efficient grid.

It has always been important to ensure that transmission developers have the tools they need to enhance the backbone of our nation’s power grid as efficiently as possible. But the challenges associated with AI data centers have firmly moved a buildout of our grid from something that was simply a good idea to something that is a national necessity.

Our power grid faces unprecedented challenges. Unfortunately, Republicans have waged war on some of the cheapest sources of energy just because Trump doesn’t like how they look. The Trump Administration has illegally thrown billions of dollars of investments Democrats made in our power grid into jeopardy. Now, if those projects are built, they’ll be paid for by

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higher monthly power bills for American families. Just another way Republicans are increasing bills nationwide.

Instead of encouraging utilities to invest in new, low-cost sources of electricity, Trump's Department of Energy is forcing old, inefficient, and expensive power plants to stay online, despite local grid operators and utilities often begging the Administration to let the plants shut down and be replaced by more efficient and affordable sources of power.

I'm afraid that Republicans are trying to move us backward, rather than forward. In 2005, Congress recognized that the federal government should play a role in siting the most nationally important power lines.

Unfortunately, the law never worked. In the twenty-one years since it passed, not a single power line has been built using these authorities. Surely now is the time for us to update the law to allow FERC to fulfill its intended purpose.

And while we need to make it easier to build power lines, we must make sure that our process to plan them makes sense in the first place. Right now, grid planning processes are far too fragmented. Utilities each engage in piecemeal planning, resulting in customers spending a lot of money for an inefficient power grid. If we build out the grid in a smart way, it will improve reliability and affordability.

Utilities and grid planners should be focused on building more efficient and cost-effective power lines – even when those lines may cross over the territory of several different utilities or may introduce competition that monopoly utilities would rather avoid.

Finally, FERC should require utilities to engage in more efficient interregional grid planning and should determine who benefits from new power lines, and therefore who is responsible for the costs.

Frankly, these shouldn't be controversial concepts. Planning smarter and making it easier to build the lines our nation needs should be common sense.

Thank you and I yield back the balance of my time.