

**Chairman Robert Latta Opening Statement
As Prepared for Delivery
Subcommittee on Energy
House Committee on Energy and Commerce
“Wires, Rates, and States: Permitting Transmission for
Affordable Reliable Power.”
Wednesday, May 13, 2026**

Welcome to today’s hearing and we thank the witnesses for appearing before us to examine the transmission development landscape.

Today’s discussion will be an important opportunity for our subcommittee’s continued work to modernize the power sector and chart a path towards energy abundance, affordability, and economic growth.

The witnesses before us will provide practical insights into why states need to maintain authority over permitting decisions, as well as the engineering and affordability considerations utilities account for through their integrated planning processes.

Throughout this Congress, our subcommittee has received extensive expert testimony on key issues facing the electric system.

We’ve discussed the affordability challenges of American families.

We’ve heard directly from NERC and our grid operators about the reliability crisis.

We've also examined the need for reliable energy during winter storms and power for future industries like AI and manufacturing.

Demand for reliable energy is rising faster than at any point in history.

Clearly, we will need more generation and transmission, and a great deal more of it.

Significant investment is flowing into the power sector.

To protect ratepayers, states, utilities, and grid operators alike must employ methodical planning practices to ensure investment is going to the most reliable and affordable infrastructure needed to keep the lights on 24/7, 365 days a year.

But today's discussion doesn't occur in a vacuum.

For years, policymakers and stakeholders have called for permitting reforms that make it easier to build in this country.

There is insurmountable evidence that certain federal authorities have been an incessant impediment to the timely construction of infrastructure.

Energy projects of all stripes are heavily litigated, challenged in court, and fight an uphill battle against seemingly endless regulations coming out of Washington.

The situation for transmission is no different.

Time and time again, transmission development is impeded by the weaponization of federal environmental permitting laws that extend project timelines and raise costs.

At the end of the day, those costs are borne by the consumer and limit economic growth.

However, the term *permitting reform* is grounded in the idea that we need to get the federal government **out** of the way, not to add more bureaucracy.

This brings us to today's topic – proposals to federalize transmission processes and usurp state authority to serve the interests of a few, while placing the costs on all.

Transmission planning across the country varies depending on market structures and regulatory models.

But what they all have in common is an extensive, bottom-up planning process to produce the most cost-effective and reliable options to connect generating resources to load centers.

When approaching a reliability challenge, sometimes the solution is building more transmission and sometimes that solution is building generation closer to load.

And like all decision-making processes, some options are tossed aside.

Proponents of big wires to connect weather-dependent resources often say that they're cheaper because no one pays for the sun to shine or wind to blow.

Simply put – if this were true, utilities would already be doing it.

In reality, multi-state interregional transmission lines can come with billion-dollar price tags and bring engineering complications that raise costs and undermine system reliability.

We find ourselves in a reliability crisis because of disastrous public policies that drive out baseload power and increase reliance on intermittent resources.

These policies ignore the reality of transmission costs, stranded assets of prematurely retiring baseload power, and the need for backup during extreme weather events, just like what was seen during Winter Storm Fern.

At the end of the day, these costs are all placed into the utility bills of American households.

The data speaks for itself – for the last 2 decades utility spending on generation has plummeted because of abundant cheap natural gas while transmission and distribution spending have skyrocketed because of intermittent energy mandates.

Permitting reform is necessary but we need to correctly diagnose what issues are practically inhibiting efficient transmission development.

I look forward to today's discussion to examine how states are best suited to examine those costs and weigh the pros and cons of transmission infrastructure, not Washington bureaucrats.

I yield back the balance of my time.