

**STATEMENT OF JESSE MURRAY
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**BEFORE THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON WATER, WILDLIFE & FISHERIES**

“Bureaucratic Delays and the Costs to Ratepayers and Electric Power Systems”

FEBRUARY 24, 2026

Chair Hageman, Ranking Member Hoyle, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. My name is Jesse Murray, and I am the Senior Vice President of Energy Delivery for NV Energy.

NV Energy is an investor-owned utility with a 45,703-square mile service territory in Nevada. We provide power to more than 1.4 million customers and help support the electricity needs of a tourist population of over 50 million annually. We work every day and invest heavily to ensure that we provide our customers with safe, secure and reliable energy, and we strive to keep our costs low to ensure affordability.

One challenge we face as an electric company is the growing threat of wildfires. It is commonly understood that the threat of wildfires has been increasing over recent years due to several factors. Wildfires can be devastating, taking lives and destroying property. They also present an enormous threat to our electricity grid and our ability to serve our customers, who often bear the brunt of wildfire costs.

As a member of the Edison Electric Institute, the trade association representing investor-owned utilities, we commend the House Natural Resources Committee for its leadership in passing the Fix Our Forests Act (HR 471) out of the House last year. We are working with members of the Senate and others to advance this important proposal.

NV Energy, like many other electric companies across the country, is taking comprehensive action to mitigate its wildfire risk and protect public safety. We have operating protocols to ensure that our infrastructure is safe during extreme weather events, including proactive de-energizations, called Public Safety Outage Management (PSOM), and more sensitive fire season mode settings that de-energize our system faster if anything impacts it. We also conduct emergency de-energizations to proactively shut off power when an active wildfire moves close enough to threaten our equipment to ensure we aren't contributing to or exacerbating an existing fire. We are constantly inspecting our poles—at a rate of over 14,000 per year and patrolling over 46,000 miles of transmission and distribution lines—to check for damage and potential hazards.

We're also conducting continuous vegetation management activities to ensure that our equipment is free of hazardous vegetation. We trim or remove more than 15,000 trees annually and clear nearly 2,000 miles of overhead lines to enhance the safety and reliability of our electric infrastructure. Additionally, we're in the process of rebuilding overhead lines to wildfire ruggedization standardizations and replacing over 3,000 expulsion fuses with safer alternatives in high fire-risk areas.

We could not do any of the above activities without the dedication and skill of our employees. Our lineworkers and tree specialists are on the front lines every day to reduce wildfire risk. Much of what they do is hazardous and complex, and we owe them our gratitude. I'm proud to have Ralph Armstrong with IBEW Local 1245 with us today as a fellow witness who represents the workers who literally keep the lights on.

In Nevada, more than 80% of the land is federally owned—either under the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) or the U.S. Forest Service. Much of the important maintenance and resilience work we perform on our system has to happen on federal lands. Our ability to work hand-in-hand with our federal land management agencies is critical to ensuring that we can do the work necessary to reduce wildfire risk and ensure safety, reliability, and affordability.

Over the years, NV Energy has developed good working relationships with the BLM and the Forest Service. In our service territory, we operate in three different national forests and 15 different BLM administrative regions, resulting in numerous relationships we strive to sustain and improve at both the leadership and staff levels. Staff at those agencies are familiar with our work and our employees, and generally, they work together well. We share a common mission to protect these lands and to be good stewards for this and future generations. However, there are several systemic challenges regarding project requirements, review processes, and predictable timelines that continue to create barriers in collaboratively progressing essential work to reduce risks to public lands, our communities, our customers, and our employees. This includes different interpretations of required actions and submittals, varying priorities, and limitations of resources needed to address the workload.

I'll highlight some issues we are facing in the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest, which is the forest with the highest share of our facilities in Nevada. I mention this not to single out any particular forest, but rather for it to serve as an example. NV Energy is undergoing several wildfire mitigation and operations projects within the National Forest. We've made great progress, but considerable work remains to more readily implement best operations and maintenance practices in a timely manner.

For example, we're working to decommission a de-energized line in a high-fire-risk area to reduce the risk of wildfire that could come from unintentional energization. We've been ready to do the work for nearly a year, with the right staff in place and the funds available. However, the Forest Service has repeatedly deferred action, stating a lack of resources to conduct the permitting work on their end. Therefore, this removal-only, wildfire-risk-reduction project remains indefinitely delayed.

Another example is our Resilient Corridor Decision Memo, which is an agreement between the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest, the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit, and NV Energy to perform treatment and maintenance of vegetation along our electrical infrastructure and power line corridors to reduce wildfire risk and improve forest health under standardized vegetation management objectives and specifications. In practice, the two units of the Forest Service apply the resilient corridor approach differently, with no apparent reason from our perspective. Different requirements are specified depending on the forest conducting the review. The facilities in question in the Humboldt-Toiyabe pre-date NEPA, and as such, some of the requirements outlined in the permit process from that forest require much of the same effort that we would need to conduct for work in a previously undisturbed area, even though the facilities already exist and an agreement is in place. Multiple layers of different activities are independently analyzed and requested by the Humboldt-Toiyabe, many times on a location-by-location basis. By contrast, the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit has a different interpretation and approach requiring less of some of these activities. The resulting discrepancy has made our overall implementation efforts slow and needlessly complicated. There should be uniformity across the Forest Service to ensure certainty and prevent unnecessary delays.

As I mentioned earlier, the Fix Our Forests Act (HR 471), as passed by the House, will help reduce wildfire risk and bring some certainty to our operations on federal lands. It strengthens existing law under Section 512 of the Federal Land Policy Management Act, which was enacted in 2018 after the Edison Electric Institute, the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the American Public Power Association and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers worked with both sides of the aisle to help bring clarity and consistency to how the Bureau of Land Management and U.S. Forest Service allow for management of electricity rights-of-way on their lands.

While the Fix Our Forest Act is pending, we continue to work with the two federal land management agencies on what they can currently do to efficiently implement Section 512 under this existing law. For this reason, the three electricity consumer trade associations the utilities here today are part of have agreed to common sense recommendations that could be implemented in the immediate future. Those recommendations are attached to my testimony.

In conclusion, thank you for holding this hearing on such an important topic, and thank you for the opportunity to share our experience and offer some suggestions about what we can do together to further reduce wildfire risk in the future. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.