

OPENING STATEMENT
RANKING MEMBER
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Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this timely and important hearing on the cybersecurity of our nation’s electric grid.

Our aging energy infrastructure is certainly in need of significant upgrades if we hope to have a reliable and resilient power supply in the decades ahead. One of the most notable upgrades would introduce what are called smart grid technologies to the electric grid. Allowing this two-way communication between consumers and operators in the management of our electricity supply could have a major impact on increasing the efficiency and resiliency of the entire system.

Major technological advancements like the smart grid come with a variety of challenges and concerns that must be addressed as new innovations like this are introduced into the market. Cybersecurity may be the most notable challenge facing the long-term implementation of these technologies.

If an entire system is interconnected and can respond more quickly to problems, as smart grids aim to do, then it also has the potential to be more quickly taken down by a malicious actor. As we will hear from our witnesses today, another basic challenge arises when combining information technology, or IT, with operational systems. IT cybersecurity solutions and safeguards cannot be used in operational technology without modification, and we must be mindful of this when planning for the future. While this is not a new challenge, it is certainly a difficult one.

However, none of these challenges should delay progress in creating a more efficient and reliable electric grid. We need to invest in cybersecurity research. We must foster productive relationships between the federal government, utilities, operators, vendors, and state and local governments. And we must ensure that any advancements in our power supply properly prioritize cybersecurity at every step.

Thank you again Mr. Chairman for holding this hearing. I look forward to hearing the testimony from our witnesses. I yield back the balance of my time.