



HOUSE SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE  
**CLIMATE CRISIS**

**Opening Statement of Chair Kathy Castor  
Hearing on “Powering Up Clean Energy:  
Investments to Modernize and Expand the Electric Grid”  
Select Committee on the Climate Crisis  
May 20, 2021**

*As prepared for delivery*

We started this Congress with hearings focused on the millions of jobs we can create in clean energy and resilience, and the growing risks and costs of doing nothing. Once again this week, we are seeing how extreme, climate-fueled events harm Americans across the country and put lives at risk. Rising temperatures and the climate crisis are amplifying these impacts.

Heavy rains and flooding in Texas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Arkansas have left homes, businesses, and entire communities underwater. Over the weekend, more than a thousand people in Southern California were forced to evacuate their homes, when a wildfire broke out in the Santa Monica mountains. Current drought conditions - and a wildfire in the middle of May - have already heightened fears of another long and brutal fire season on the West Coast. Our hearts go out to the families dealing with these disasters. And our efforts here in Congress must focus on solutions to help them, not only in the near-term, but also to avoid catastrophic climate consequences for our children and grandchildren.

One of those important solutions is to modernize and expand the electric grid, making it stronger and more resilient. Wildfires out west and cold snaps in the South have left Americans in the dark and in danger just in the last 4 months. Climate-fueled disasters continue to hit our energy infrastructure, which is already in need of major repairs. Nationwide, the American Society of Civil Engineers gives American energy infrastructure a C-minus rating. We don't want a C-minus. This is America, and we can do so much better. And when we do it, hopefully together, we will create a lot of jobs, and mend our supply chains with Buy American.

Building a modern grid can increase our energy capabilities and improve efficiency across America, all while ensuring greater reliability. The energy catastrophe in Texas demonstrated the need for safeguarding the nation's disconnected grids with better backup and interconnections. We have many innovations at the ready, but need to deploy them – and this also can create good-paying jobs that will jumpstart our economy. According to a recent report from Americans for a Clean Energy Grid, there are already almost two dozen shovel-ready projects that will reduce congestion, improve reliability, and put over a million Americans to work. Another report - by the American Council on Renewable Energy - shows that an Investment Tax Credit for priority high-voltage transmission lines would lead to 650,000 new jobs.

Both reports show that investing in our grid will create jobs across America. That's why renewing and modernizing the grid is a centerpiece of President Biden's American Jobs Plan. By passing the President's infrastructure plan, we can put hundreds of thousands of people to work laying thousands of miles of transmission lines that will connect entire regions of our nation. It is a historic investment – and a once-in-a-generation opportunity to invest in America so we're come back stronger.

We already have the innovative technologies needed to increase the efficiency, capacity, and flexibility of our electric grid. The experts here today will highlight how, and we know we need to move quickly. As we expand clean energy, we'll also reduce pollution and lower electricity bills. And we'll build new transmission lines so that every city, town, and county can access America's affordable and abundant wind and solar energy. We must set ambitious goals via clean energy and energy efficiency standards. Many states are way ahead on this and we need to catch up.

Cleaning up the power sector will also help us reduce carbon pollution from the transportation, buildings, and industrial sectors. Many automakers have already announced their commitment to electric vehicles. I loved watching President Biden drive the new Ford F-150 in Michigan, where he previewed the new electric pick-up truck and renewed his commitment to a nationwide charging network. This is how we solve the climate crisis – by unleashing American innovation and building the cars of tomorrow in America.

Today's witnesses will give us important insights on the road ahead of us, as we double down on clean energy in a way that prioritizes workers and environmental justice. I look forward to our conversation.