



HOUSE SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE  
**CLIMATE CRISIS**

**Opening Statement of Chair Kathy Castor  
Hearing on “Keeping the Lights On:  
Strategies for Grid Resilience and Reliability”  
Select Committee on the Climate Crisis  
February 15, 2022**

*As prepared for delivery*

As the climate crisis continues to threaten our communities, we cannot remain stuck in the past. The key to solving the climate crisis is electrifying our economy now – and the key to electrifying our economy is a strong and reliable grid with the incredible innovations that were not even envisioned twenty years ago. Strengthening the grid today increases the chances that we can keep the lights on tomorrow after extreme weather hits. A strong grid also will help drive down the costs of disasters, avoid disruptions, and allow businesses to bounce back faster. And it can reduce the costs of energy year-round, as more Americans power their homes and cars with affordable, clean electricity made in the USA.

Strengthening the grid is also about saving lives. Just last summer, at least one in three Americans experienced a climate disaster – and in many cases, the consequences were deadly. We all remember the destructive winter storm only one year ago that knocked out electricity in much of Texas and other areas across the Southeast, leaving millions without power. Nearly 250 people died in the aftermath – and too many families were left without drinking water, without food or shelter, or stuck with astronomical energy bills.

And it’s not just winter storms; the climate crisis is making wildfires, hurricanes, and heat waves more frequent. In 2018, California experienced the costliest and most destructive wildfire in its history. The Camp Fire destroyed more than 18,000 buildings and killed 85 people. It was a devastating reminder of how aging transmission equipment, coupled with climate-fueled drought, expose communities to unexpected risks. And it was a devastating example of how climate change is expanding the number of harmful scenarios we need to prepare for, making it more challenging to safeguard the places we call home.

That’s why today we’re focusing on ways to strengthen the grid and lower costs for the American people. I’m proud that President Biden’s Bipartisan Infrastructure Law made historic investments on this front – including \$5 billion for grid hardening and another \$5 billion to spur technologies that will improve grid reliability and resilience. The Infrastructure Law included \$2.5 billion to help build new transmission lines, as well as \$3 billion devoted to enhancing grid flexibility. And it made investments to help address the growing threat of wildfires, including \$5 billion for burying power lines and building microgrids, and more than \$3 billion for hazardous fuel reduction, controlled burning, and community defense resources. The innovative advances in grid-enhancing technologies are remarkable. And we must deploy them at a wide scale to benefit all Americans and help them save on electric bills.

All of these investments provide a great foundation to strengthen our grid. But we cannot stop there. We need additional strategies to keep the climate crisis from getting worse – and to unleash an economy powered by our own abundant and affordable renewable energy. That includes enacting new tax credits for transmission and storage. It includes expanding tax credits for clean energy and electric vehicles. And it means investing in the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund, which will help us deploy resilient distributed energy equitably to communities across the country. Those are all things that the House sent to the Senate in our Build Back Better Act. And we look forward to the Senate getting these critical investments past the finish line.

Before we introduce our witnesses, I want to set the record straight: in the United States of America, we don't need to choose between energy that's affordable, reliable, or clean. It's not an either/or situation. We can have all three. We don't need to pick between lower costs, a reliable electric grid, or clean air for our kids. Clean energy gives us the chance to have it all. That's why the Biden Administration and Democrats in Congress are taking steps to meet these challenges head on. That includes work to develop a national strategy on critical minerals and recycling, which will help us secure the components we need to expand clean energy nationwide. And it means doubling down on innovative tools, whether it's harnessing advances in artificial intelligence, or expanding the use of buildings-to-grid and vehicles-to-grid technologies.

That's what is great about innovation in America and our "can do" spirit. Our aging electric grid needs major upgrades and expansion. It's time to integrate lower-cost clean technologies into the power system, to invest in adaptation and resilience, and to solve the climate crisis.