

**Committee on Energy and Commerce**

**Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery  
of  
Subcommittee on Energy, Climate, and Grid Security  
Ranking Member Diana DeGette**

***Hearing on “Powering America’s Economy, Security, and Our Way of Life: Examining the State of Grid Reliability”***

**September 28, 2023**

Thank you, Chairman Duncan. Our nation’s power grid is a massive and complex patchwork that powers our lives. Ensuring reliable electricity and operation of our power grid is paramount to our well-being and national security. These are the tenets of electricity that Americans expect: reliability and affordability. As I said in our energy efficiency hearing two weeks ago, when Americans flip a switch, they expect it to come on and that it won’t break the bank. But as we face the mounting threat of climate change, Americans also expect that the energy they rely on won’t fuel the crisis. As we move forward in the clean energy transition, work to decarbonize every aspect of our lives, and as the impact of the climate crisis grows, reliability may be the difference between life and death.

Losing power during extreme heat or extreme cold events is life threatening, so we must ensure we have the assets and infrastructure to ensure reliability – even as the climate changes. And that’s why all of you are here today. As the operators of the power grid for millions of Americans, all of you are responsible for keeping the lights on, keeping prices down, and, in a warming world, driving down emissions. Regional transmission organizations (RTOs) and Independent System Operators (ISOs) can help ensure that consumers have lower costs and, in times of stress, can tap into resources from a wide geographic area to keep the lights on. RTOs and ISOs can help take the patchwork system that is our grid and apply a comprehensive, regional approach to transmission planning that drives down costs.

Now, as we electrify more and more of our lives, we must bring more generating assets and transmission online, and we must ensure that the policies that provide business certainty and foster clean energy are in place. To do this, we must work together, and I think today’s hearing helps foster this partnership. But, as we talk about reliability, I do think there is one particular area that would make a significant impact, and that’s increasing the number of transmission lines we have in this country. Building out transmission capacity will allow more generating assets to connect to the grid. It will allow for a greater ability to cross your territories and help drive down costs for consumers as we work to connect more regions. In times of emergency or natural disaster, it will allow us to get power to where it’s needed most, preventing tragic circumstances from becoming catastrophic. And, with increased electrification and anticipated increase in power demands, more transmission will be needed to bring Americans the electricity they need to power their lives, regardless of how that electricity is generated.

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Now, I do appreciate that the Chairman is holding a hearing on the grid where we can discuss the importance of transmission. It is incredibly important that we conduct oversight of RTOs and ISOs, not only because reliability is critical for our nation, but also because I do believe there are some opportunities for improvement within RTOs and ISOs to help boost transmission deployment, and in turn, improve reliability. However, I would encourage the Chairman to hold a legislative hearing on the transmission bills that have been introduced so far this Congress. I know several of my colleagues on this side of the aisle, and even some on this Committee, have introduced legislation around transmission, and it is important that we take a hard look at these ideas. I would also welcome any Republican led legislation on transmission and would love to partner with anyone on this Committee regarding transmission legislation. Now, I do look forward to having an in-depth discussion with our witnesses, and hearing about the challenges and opportunities that they face. With that, I yield back.