KOUNTOUPES DENHAM CARR & REID

FROM: Kountoupes Denham Carr & Reid

DATE: Wednesday, June 24, 2026

RE: House Energy & Commerce Energy Subcommittee Markup of Eight Electricity and Pipeline Safety Bills

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Topline Summary

- Members of the House Energy and Commerce Energy Subcommittee convened for a markup to consider eight bills addressing electric grid reliability, ratepayer protection, transmission modernization, load forecasting, generator interconnection, and pipeline safety. All eight bills were agreed to favorably by voice vote.
- There was broad bipartisan agreement on the need to protect consumers from rising electricity costs driven by the rapid growth of AI data centers and large energy users. Members on both sides emphasized the principle that large load customers should bear the costs of the infrastructure needed to serve their demand rather than shift those costs onto households and small businesses.
- Republicans emphasized expanding grid capacity, reducing barriers to advanced transmission deployment, leveraging AI to improve grid operations, and affirming American energy dominance. Democrats highlighted the importance of grid modernization, clean energy deployment, and ensuring tech companies are held accountable for the full costs and impacts of data center buildouts.
- The Pipeline Safety Authorization Act of 2026 drew the most discussion, with Democrats raising concerns that language addressing interference with pipeline operations could be interpreted too broadly and affect First Amendment protections. Republican leadership acknowledged the concern and committed to refining the provision before full committee markup, and the related amendment was withdrawn in a collaborative agreement to continue bipartisan negotiations.

Members Attending: Chairman Bob Latta (R-OH), Ranking Member Kathy Castor (D-FL), Full Committee Chairman Brett Guthrie (R-KY), Full Committee Ranking Member Frank Pallone (D-NJ), Rep. Randy Weber (R-TX), Rep. Mariannette Miller-Meeks (R-IA), Rep. Laurel Lee (R-FL), Rep. Gabe Evans (R-CO), Rep. Jennifer McClellan (D-VA), Rep. Doris Matsui (D-CA), & Rep. Paul Tonko (D-NY)

Live Hearing Link

Meeting called to order by Chairman Latta.

Opening Statements

Chairman Bob Latta (R-OH): Welcome to today's subcommittee markup to consider eight bills to lower costs for households and promote innovation in our electric sector, while ensuring the United States remains in pole position to win the race with Communist China for AI development. The legislation before our subcommittee is the culmination of an extensive regular order process to ensure sufficient public input and technical assistance.

Throughout this Congress, witnesses before our subcommittee have made things crystal clear. Our nation is in the midst of a concerning reliability crisis with affordability challenges straining household budgets, and our electric sector must meet the moment to ensure our country can compete and win in the next generation economy.

These pillars have been our north star. Today, we are taking action to improve the daily lives of everyday American families. Importantly, H.R. 9340, the Ratepayer Protection Act, introduced by our colleague from Colorado's 8th Congressional District, seeks to ensure the costs associated with rapid load growth are not placed on the backs of captive ratepayers. The concept is simple: hardworking American households should not foot the bill for the costs they are caused by growing electricity demands from large energy users. Using a light touch, targeted, forward-looking approach, H.R. 9340 provides direction to state utility commissions to establish large load tariffs that can methodically fuel investment and job training in industry while protecting households from picking up the tab.

The grid needs additional capacity and fast, yet transmission costs have increased dramatically in the twenty-first century while fuel and generation costs have plummeted. The cheapest transmission line is one that you don't have to build. H.R. 6633, the High Capacity Grid Act, sponsored by our colleague from North Dakota's at-large congressional district, will enhance our bulk power system with advanced conductors that have a higher carrying capacity. In a modernized electric system, H.R. 9335, the Advanced Transmission Reduced Rates Act, sponsored by our colleague from Texas's 12th District, will bolster important work as part of the Department of Energy's efforts to develop innovative grid solutions and make it easier for utilities to deploy these technologies.

Alongside these efforts, H.R. 9332, the Load Forecasting Enhancement Act, introduced by our colleague from Ohio's 12th District, will foster important federal and state collaboration to improve the accuracy of demand projections that will lead to more cost-effective infrastructure buildout. It is important to address the impacts AI has on the grid, but equally important to consider how AI can be used to improve the grid. H.R. 9339, the Affordable Innovation for Grid Act, sponsored by our colleague from Tennessee's 1st District, leverages the expertise of DOE to study the different ways innovative computational models can improve efficiencies in our system.

We also consider H.R. 6529, Affecting Families from AI Data Center Energy Cost Act, and I thank our colleague from Ohio's 1st District for agreeing to changes that respect the critical roles of states in addressing retail rates of electric service.

Also under consideration is H.R. 9338, the Pipeline Safety Authorization Act, which reauthorizes PHMSA's pipeline safety program for five years. The streamlined bill will enable PHMSA to refocus on safety as its essential mission while making commonsense changes to ensure PHMSA can regulate efficiently while maintaining and improving safety. This bill was a product of bipartisan work that is still ongoing, and I look forward to continuing to work with our colleagues on both sides of the aisle to find a bipartisan path forward to ensure the safe development and oversight of our pipeline infrastructure.

Lastly, I would like to thank our colleague and Ranking Member from Florida's 14th District for her continued work to refine H.R. 2986, the Expediting Generator Interconnection Procedures Act, to ensure the provisions of the bill address current challenges facing the interconnection process and provide discretion to regions based on their unique differences. While improvements are necessary for the bill, I commit to working with our colleague, the Ranking Member, in good faith to hopefully find common ground. Altogether, this timely subcommittee markup takes another step in affirming American energy dominance for the benefit of all of our constituents. And with that, I yield back.

Ranking Member Kathy Castor (D-FL): Thank you, Chairman Latta and colleagues. We are really looking forward to today's markup. We have a lot of work to do, especially since household energy bills have risen 18 percent in the United States since 2025, and the war in Iran has inflicted additional economic pain on our neighbors back home. GasBuddy reported yesterday that gas prices in Florida alone are averaging nearly $3.89, almost a dollar higher than before the war started. It is clear that we have got to work together to lower energy costs.

People are pained, though, by the waste of time and money in watching the administration kill off energy projects, paying companies $2.5 billion to abandon their offshore wind projects, many of which were already under construction, and spending $700 million of taxpayer money to prop up dying coal plants. In this affordability squeeze, it makes no sense for the president to cancel energy projects, but he has done so for 382 energy projects.

It is hopeful, in any event, that this committee can begin work on real solutions. For example, our bipartisan proposal to protect working families from the cost of data center energy infrastructure is a step in the right direction. Last week, FERC also recognized the importance of protecting ratepayers, as it ordered regional grid operators connecting large energy users to adopt a unanimous bipartisan agreement to protect consumers while delivering transparency, reliability, and innovation. However, it is important to remember that FERC's actions will not help the one third of the American population who live outside of an electricity market. We need to make sure that all of the nation's operators are playing by fair rules, not just some of them.

FERC also outlined a number of solutions: grid enhancing technologies, which allow us to get more out of the existing grid we have already paid for; advanced load flexibility, which can limit the need for grid upgrades and reduce power bills; and smarter planning, reducing project speculation and improving grid studies. And now it is Congress' turn to build on that work.

I appreciate the inclusion of my Expediting Generator Interconnection Procedures Act in today's markup, and I appreciate your remarks at the outset, Mr. Chairman. I do hope we can work together in a bipartisan way to move it forward to the full committee. We really cannot afford to wait. We need congressional action in this committee to make the targeted policy reforms now in how we plan, permit, and pay for transmission that can unlock the energy growth our country needs.

We need to do more to measure and increase grid utilization, which could save Americans up to $100 billion over the next decade. We need to help deploy virtual power plants, leveraging innovative new technologies like smart thermostats and batteries already in communities across the country to provide grid reliability faster and at lower cost. We need to do more to ensure tech companies meet their promises to not only pay for energy infrastructure, but also power their data centers with cleaner, cheaper energy and battery storage.

Today's markup also includes a long overdue reauthorization of our pipeline safety program. While the bill is still incomplete, I appreciate that my Republican colleagues are working with us, and I hope that we can come to a bipartisan agreement that protects the American people, not just oil and gas special interests.

Let me be clear: the bills we are discussing today will not address all of the challenges facing the high cost of energy and the need to upgrade our grid, but they take an important step in the right direction. I hope we can all continue to work together to deliver clean, reliable energy that can power the 21st century economy and lower costs for all Americans. Thank you, and I yield back.

Full Committee Chairman Brett Guthrie (R-KY): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate you holding this markup today. The subcommittee will consider eight bills to protect electric ratepayers from unnecessary costs, increase grid capacity, and improve pipeline safety.

The bills reflect a significant amount of bipartisan work and take practical steps to address some of the most pressing energy and power issues of the day. These issues concern the ability of our power system to reliably meet growing power demand and what is needed to protect ratepayers from unprecedented spending to meet that demand. We also take steps this Congress to ensure a safe and affordable supply of oil and gas for businesses and households.

Throughout this Congress, the Energy Subcommittee has developed a large hearing record on the various forces that will affect the future of our energy system. For the power sector, we have heard from more than 40 expert witnesses representing all aspects of the industry, from small utilities and major grid operators to state and federal regulators. We have examined reliability

challenges, the benefits of vital data centers, and what is needed to build the power generation and grid we need for the future, and to do so quickly.

These are complex challenges that frustrate simple or one-size-fits-all solutions, especially when it comes to the various ways states and communities are responding to energy and power needs. Even at the federal regulatory level, a one-size-fits-all power sector policy may not be appropriate. Just this past week, on the issue of connecting large-scale energy users to transmission systems, FERC chose to assess different regions on their own terms, recognizing that what works in the Midwest may not work in New England.

Regional and state approaches matter, and we should not forget that. This is why policy that supports the sharing of technical information to encourage best practices makes sense, whether it applies to the grid or to pipelines. It also makes sense that general frameworks allow communities to then adjust to meet their own needs. This is why several of the bills before us today are structured as they are.

We are on a good track. Thanks to your work, Chairman Latta, and thanks to the members on both sides of the aisle and Ranking Member Castor for their willingness to work together. We are committed to doing so, and I yield back.

Full Committee Ranking Member Frank Pallone (D-NJ): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Most of the bills on today's agenda are framed around trying to minimize the impact of data centers on our nation's power grid. I think in general these bills are a useful first step, but compared to the challenges the American power grid is facing, they are not nearly enough.

Energy consumption from data centers doubled between 2017 and 2023. That is a six-year period, and that is just the beginning if big tech gets its way. Last week, a Berkeley Lab report found that data centers may be responsible for over 15 percent of our nation's total electricity consumption by 2030, just four years from now. The North American Electric Reliability Corporation put out its most severe warning last month, saying that data centers pose a significant risk to the reliability of our power grid.

These data centers consume a lot of electricity, driving up monthly energy costs for hardworking American families. Across the country, electricity prices are 18 percent higher than they were when President Trump was inaugurated. Promises by the data center industry and big tech that these facilities will bring down costs have fallen flat. Instead, the grid operator for the Mid-Atlantic region estimated that ratepayers, including families in New Jersey, paid over $9 billion last year for the electricity that data centers and big tech need to fuel their AI demands.

And then there are the environmental impacts. We are seeing data centers running on dirty diesel generators that drive up pollution, while the Trump administration runs roughshod over the Clean Air Act's critical community protections to shield Elon Musk from accountability. There are reports of data centers being approved without any analysis of their water use, even in water-stressed communities. Those living and working near data centers complain of chronic noise

pollution and increased light pollution, and the EPA is even trying to fast-track the approval of chemicals like new PFAS for use in data centers, putting the health of Americans across the nation at risk.

So, Mr. Chairman, this simply cannot continue. That is why I am in favor of a national AI data center moratorium until we can find a way to ensure they do not harm our nation's air, water, and power bills. Towns in my district are way ahead of this and are already seeking a moratorium. Asbury Park, Red Bank, Old Bridge, and Sayreville have all taken this bold step. The city of New Brunswick put a stop on a data center plan after the community stood together to oppose the project. We need to follow in their footsteps here in Congress.

Americans across the country have expressed concern and opposition to the rampant construction of AI data centers, and Congress should take this political groundswell seriously with a data center moratorium. That is what we need. Even President Trump has realized he has a data center problem. Instead of trying to drive real change, however, Trump asked big tech to sign a so-called ratepayer protection pledge with no enforcement mechanism. At a time when Americans are seeing their bills skyrocket, we need action, not toothless promises from big tech.

Last week's action by FERC to create rules of the road may have some promise, but it is going to take months, if not years, to come to fruition, and Americans need help now.

Democrats have been clear: families around the country should not see their power bills rise by a single cent because of data centers. Real families are suffering real harm because of the pace of this buildout. Unfortunately, I do not think Republicans see it that way. Just a few weeks ago, committee Republicans initiated an investigation insisting that China is somehow the reason Americans oppose an unlimited buildout of data centers. That is simply not the case. When I go home to New Jersey, I talk to constituents who are concerned about data centers. These are real people with real worries, not paid Chinese actors or people unwillingly tricked by the Chinese Communist Party. It is simply not true. This committee has to take more aggressive action to ensure that data center developers are held accountable and that consumers are not left holding the bill.

Finally, I want to address pipeline safety. I will say more about it when we get to that portion of the markup, Mr. Chairman. I do want to thank Chairman Guthrie and Chairman Latta and their staff for working together constructively to find a bipartisan path forward. We are not quite there yet, but we have momentum, and I am confident that we can eventually craft a product all of us can support with regard to the pipeline safety bill.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back the balance of my time.

Legislation
H.R. 9332, Load Forecasting Enhancement Act (Balderson and Menendez)
H.R. 9339, Affordable Innovation for the Grid Act (Harshbarger and Mullin)

H.R. 9335, Advanced Transmission to Reduce Rates Act (Goldman)
H.R. 9340, Ratepayer Protection Act (Evans and Castor)
H.R. 6633, High-Capacity Grid Act (Fedorchak)
H.R. 6529, Protecting Families from AI Data Center Energy Costs Act (Landsman)
H.R. 2986, Expediting Generator Interconnection Procedures Act of 2025 (Castor)
H.R. 9338, Pipeline Safety Authorization Act of 2026 (Weber)

Discussion:

H.R. 9332, Load Forecasting Enhancement Act

Rep. Troy Balderson (R-OH) thanked the committee and Rep. Menendez for working on the bill with him. He discussed how factors such as increased AI demand and advanced manufacturing have created unprecedented challenges for the electrical grid. He explained that this need for energy has led to a significant increase in data center construction, noting that 41 data centers were located in his district. Rep. Balderson noted that many of his constituents were concerned about the impact that this infrastructure would have on costs. He urged Congress to ensure that large load upgrades for new generation energy should not be paid for by constituents. He emphasized the importance of accurate planning for this growth to ensure a reliable grid. Rep. Balderson touted his bill for ensuring states and utilities are using the best tools possible to measure load growth for appropriate planning. He explained that accurate load forecasting prevents underbuilding or overbuilding infrastructure. Rep. Balderson stated this legislation would establish regional joint boards for state utility regulators and FERC commissioners to examine, identify, and report best practices for improving the accuracy, transparency, and accountability of projects for new electric loads. He noted that his bill would amend the Public Utility Regulatory Policies Act to require each state to consider incorporating practices that lead to more accurate load forecasting. He argued that data center's potential impact on the electricity load requires states and utilities to obtain tools to distinguish between speculative projects and more committed projects that can move forward. Rep. Balderson asserted that accurate forecasting would lead to better planning for a reliable grid.

Rep. Rob Menendez (D-NJ): expressed support for the markup and highlighted his bipartisan partnership with Rep. Balderson on H.R. 9332, the Load Forecasting Enhancement Act. He explained that the bill would direct state utility commissions and investor-owned utilities to adopt best practices in demand forecasting, including for large loads such as AI data centers, to ensure accurate long-term planning. Rep. Menendez argued that improved load forecasting would help prevent blackouts and brownouts and protect constituents from sudden spikes in their energy bills. He also emphasized the need to hold tech companies accountable for the economic, environmental, and health impacts of AI data centers, and noted that his separate Data Center Transparency Act would provide greater visibility into data centers' energy use and their effects on water and air quality. He urged his colleagues to support the bill.

Rep. Paul Tonko (D-NJ) opened by noting that significant but uncertain electricity demand growth is straining current load forecasting methods, which he said lack transparency and vary

considerably across regions and utilities. He said the bill takes a positive step by promoting regional coordination toward a harmonized forecasting framework for large, fast-moving, and uncertain loads, calling it critical to meeting rising demand while preserving affordability and reliability for ratepayers. He argued, however, that DOE should also play an explicit role, noting that Secretary Wright agreed at an earlier budget hearing that load forecasting is a major administration focus. Rep. Tonko said DOE's analytical and modeling capabilities, including through the National Labs, could provide valuable technical assistance to grid operators, states, and utilities, particularly public power entities and rural co-ops that handle load forecasting but typically don't interact with FERC and often lack the modeling capacity available to larger utilities.
He closed by asking the chair and ranking member to work with him ahead of full committee markup to explicitly recognize DOE's complementary role and authorize it to provide technical assistance for load forecasting efforts.

H.R. 9332, Load Forecasting Enhancement Act, was agreed to favorably by a voice vote.

H.R. 9339, Affordable Innovation for the Grid Act

Rep. Diana Harshbarger (R-TN) introduced her bipartisan legislation with Rep. Mullin, the Affordable Innovation for the Grid Act, which would direct DOE, FERC, and NERC to study how high-performance computing and AI can enhance the bulk power system and identify limitations that could delay adoption of these technologies. She argued that as energy demand grows rapidly, grid infrastructure needs to operate at peak efficiency, and that AI and high-performance computing could dramatically speed up the interconnection queue process and bring new generation online faster. She also pointed to potential applications in predictive maintenance, allowing operators to identify and address failing assets before they break down. She noted that while many utilities have begun integrating these technologies, others remain hesitant and want more information, and said the study would provide critical analysis to help policymakers and stakeholders adapt to the next wave of energy demand. She urged colleagues to support the legislation and yielded back.

Rep. Kevin Mullin (D-CA) thanked Rep. Harshbarger for her partnership on the Affordable Innovation for the Grid Act. He explained that the bill directs the Department of Energy to study how artificial intelligence and high-performance computing can modernize the power system, with particular focus on accelerating grid interconnection. Rep. Mullin noted that generators currently face an average five-year wait to achieve interconnection, a significant portion of which is attributable to complex engineering studies. He highlighted the potential for advanced tools to dramatically compress these timelines, citing a company in his district, Tapestry, that is replacing traditional modeling with AI simulations, as well as a FERC Commissioner's observation that an interconnection study that originally took two years was replicated by an advanced computing model in just ten days. He argued that passing the bill would increase efficiency, reduce barriers to adoption, and safely speed up energy deployment.

H.R. 9339, Affordable Innovation for the Grid Act, was agreed to favorably by a voice vote.

H.R. 9335, Advanced Transmission to Reduce Rates Act

Rep. Dan Goldman (R-TX) spoke in favor of his bill, the Advancing Transmission Technology to Reduce Rates Act, framing grid congestion as a hidden tax on American families and businesses. He argued the bill would make the electric grid smarter and more efficient without mandates or federal overreach, pointing to Texas's rapid population and business growth as driving increased strain on the grid that raises costs for utilities and consumers. He said the bill would expand access to advanced transmission technologies such as advanced conductors and dynamic line ratings to move electricity more efficiently and reduce congestion. Specifically, it would create a public DOE database on advanced transmission projects, provide voluntary technical support to utilities and state regulators, and direct DOE to develop voluntary best practices for reducing wildfire risk. The bill would also exempt certain DOE grants and loans for these projects from NEPA review, which Rep. Goldman argued would prevent states like Texas from being delayed by lengthy bureaucratic processes. He emphasized the bill imposes no new mandates or top-down requirements, characterizing it as a state-driven approach consistent with what has historically worked best for Texas, and urged his colleagues to support the legislation before yielding back.

Ranking Member Kathy Castor (D-FL) said she strongly supports the general goal of Rep. Goldman's bill promoting Advanced Transmission Technologies (ATTs), but raised concerns about Section 2(c), which would exempt DOE funding for these technologies from National Environmental Policy Act review. She argued that the broader question of whether and how federal grants should be subject to NEPA is better addressed in the ongoing permitting reform discussions already underway in Congress, and cautioned against letting that larger debate complicate this narrower bill. She praised other elements of the legislation, particularly the DOE clearinghouse it would establish, which she called genuinely useful, and the wildfire mitigation best practices, which she said could be especially valuable as climate change expands wildfire risk across the country. She asked that the NEPA debate be reserved for the broader permitting conversation so this bill could remain focused on unlocking the potential of advanced transmission technologies, and yielded back.

Goldman Amendment 01 to H.R. 9335, Advanced Transmission to Reduce Rates Act

Rep. Dan Goldman (R-TX) introduced an amendment to the Advanced Transmission Technology to Reduce Rates Act, clarifying the bill's NEPA exclusion for Department of Energy funding programs that support advanced transmission technologies. He explained that the amendment ensures cooperative agreements are covered alongside loans and grants, so that the federal government does not stand in the way of utilities working to modernize their systems. Rep. Goldman argued that the amendment strengthens the NEPA exclusion to allow innovative technologies to be deployed quickly and urged his colleagues to support it.

Goldman Amendment 01 to H.R. 9335, Advanced Transmission to Reduce Rates Act, was agreed to favorably by a voice vote.

H.R. 9335, the Advanced Transmission to Reduce Rates Act, as amended, was agreed to favorably by a voice vote.

H.R. 9340, Ratepayer Protection Act

Rep. Gabe Evans (R-CO) explained that this legislation was shaped directly by his constituents who were concerned about the cost of living while observing the rise in electricity demand. He argued that while the United States should ensure that they lead in AI development, costs associated with this infrastructure should not be borne ratepayers. He explained that his bill would require each state regulatory authority to consider adopting large load standards that apply to customers with 100 MW of peak power demand at a single facility. He outlined the three principles that his bill relied upon: 1) large load costumers should cover the full cost of generation, transmission, or distribution updates needed to serve their load, 2) contracts should include meaningful financial assurances to ensure large entities have the resources to foot the bill, and 3) allowing states to consider how to connect large loads in comparison to imposing a restrictive federal standard. He stated that this legislation builds upon the Trump administration's Ratepayer Protection Pledge by promote public-private partnerships to encourage growth while lowering costs. Rep. Evans argued that expanding the electric power system can improve reliability, harden infrastructure, and lower long-term costs if large-load customers pick up the tab. He noted that Colorado did not yet have a standard for large load data centers and asserted that this bill would give his state responsibility policy to work from and ensure constituents about price surges. He emphasized that this legislation was a bipartisan, commonsense bill that would improve the energy backbone needed to compete against China in the AI race.

Ranking Member Kathy Castor (D-FL) thanked Rep. Evans for his partnership on the Ratepayer Protection Act. She noted that communities across the country, including in Florida, are grappling with complex decisions about siting and approving data centers. She said that while many see potential in jobs and tax revenue, constituents are anxious about the impact on electricity rates, particularly amid high inflation and an ongoing affordability squeeze. Ranking Member Castor argued that the bill is an important first step and an opportunity to address increased energy demand while lowering costs by modernizing the electric grid, much of which was built in the 1960s and 1970s and is increasingly strained by climate-driven events. She highlighted several examples of innovation already underway, including Google-funded virtual power plant and battery deployment programs in PJM and Minnesota, and a clean transition tariff approved by the Nevada Public Utilities Commission for emerging technologies such as advanced geothermal. Ranking Member Castor emphasized that the bill places the cost burden solely on large load customers and urged her colleagues to support it. She expressed her commitment to continuing to advance bipartisan solutions that ensure large loads are served by cleaner, cheaper energy with battery storage.

Rep. August Pfluger (R-TX) spoke in favor of the bill, highlighting interest in data center development in West Texas and outstanding questions about the electrical burdens required to bring them online. He said ratepayers already connected to the grid should not be forced to subsidize costs from data centers and if the load required new infrastructure, the entities creating the demand should pay for it. He emphasized that the bill helped ensure that as they build

infrastructure to support AI and data centers, they did so in a way that supported ratepayers and kept electricity affordable. Rep. Pfluger noted that winning the AI race could not come at the expense of the American people, and innovation and economic growth should lower costs, not shift the bill to ratepayers. He said the bill got it right and said the committee needed to be clear eyed on the CCP working through information channels to sway public opinion and the bill could push back on that.

Rep. Scott Peters (D-CA) commended Rep. Evans and committee staff for working together to reach a bipartisan agreement through this bill. He noted that while increased electricity demand was a sign of exciting innovations, it also has led to certain complications that Congress needs to address. He discussed how increased electricity and utility rates are worrisome to his constituents and said he was glad the committee was meeting to consider this important issue. Rep. Peters emphasized the importance of keeping up with China, Europe, and India on electrical grid buildout, noting that China has completed over 8200 miles of high voltage long range transmission lines. He stated that directing FERC to act upon an interregional transmission planning rule will show regions how to meet energy demands without being overly prescriptive. He emphasized the importance of planning and prioritizing efficient projects like interregional transmission to increase reliability and lower costs. He said he looked forward to working with his colleagues to ensure this bill is strengthened to meet the current moment.

Rep. Julie Fedorchak (R-ND) thanked Rep. Evans and Ranking Member Castor for their bipartisan work on the Ratepayer Protection Act. She argued that the bill rests on a straightforward principle: those who cause costs should pay for those costs. Rep. Fedorchak noted that regulators, utilities, and consumer advocates have long agreed that customers who create the need for new infrastructure should bear the associated costs rather than shift them onto others. She emphasized that this principle is especially important given the unprecedented growth in large loads across the country. Rep. Fedorchak referenced a subcommittee hearing earlier this year in which every witness agreed that it is not fair for American families to subsidize infrastructure driven by large energy users, and that large loads have demonstrated a willingness to pay for the infrastructure they require. She cited her home state of North Dakota as a model, where proper cost allocation structures have saved existing customers $30 million and demonstrated that new load can strengthen the system and lower costs when cost causers pay their share. Rep. Fedorchak argued that getting cost allocation right protects hardworking families, supports economic development, and builds the infrastructure needed to meet growing demand. She expressed support for the bill while noting that additional work remains to further guide and direct cost allocation policy.

Rep. Kim Schrier (D-WA) expressed strong support for the Ratepayer Protection Act. She noted that the data center buildout is a major concern in Washington State and across the country, with constituents worried about the impact of AI energy demand on their utility bills and grid reliability. Rep. Schrier highlighted that utility bills in her district are up nearly 15 percent compared to last year and noted that experts project the Northwest energy supply may be insufficient to meet demand by 2028. She attributed the strain to a combination of factors, including climate change, the Trump administration's cuts to clean energy investment, permitting delays, and surging data center energy use. Rep. Schrier argued that large tech companies

benefiting from AI development must fund, build, and connect their own energy infrastructure to the grid rather than leave hardworking families stuck with the bill.

Rep. Doris Matsui (D-CA) spoke in support of the bill because American families should not be paying for tech companies utility bills. She noted that while the requirements included in the bill were a good starting point, they were the bare minimum and they could do more to bring down energy costs during the energy crisis. She highlighted investments in clean energy infrastructure by Democrats and said Republicans ignoring those warnings has made energy costs rise 18% since President Trump took office. Rep. Matsui said that the bill was only a good first start and urged getting serious about lowering electricity costs.

Rep. Jennifer McClellan (D-VA) noted that the impact of data centers has been a prominent issue in Virginia, the world capital of data centers. She discussed the need to meet energy demand in a digital world, explaining that American households have an average of 21 devices connected to the internet. She stated that AI demand has greatly increased this demand and outlined the number of concerns from constituent she has heard during her most recent district work period. She asserted that these bills were a good starting point for promoting energy infrastructure while ensuring ratepayers do not face inflated prices. Rep. McClellan argued that ratepayer's costs should not depend on what state an individual lives in and criticized the current bill for only directing states to consider establishing a new rate class. She also brought up the need to discuss these issues with local government, who are currently being pressured by companies to allow the buildout of data center infrastructure in their areas. She said she would support the current bills but argued that individuals across the country needed to be reassured that their needs would not be ignored in the face of large AI companies.

Rep. Paul Tonko (D-NY) thanked the committee, including Ranking Member Castor, for taking up the bill, and said protecting residential ratepayers from costs imposed by large loads like data centers and crypto mining facilities should be a priority. He called the bill's Section 111(d) amendment a good first step, but argued Congress shouldn't stop there, and said addressing the root causes of energy affordability more broadly should follow. He raised a concern about the bill's definition of "large loads" as anything above 100 megawatts, arguing that threshold could sweep in manufacturers and undercut their competitiveness rather than targeting data centers specifically. While acknowledging any megawatt threshold is somewhat arbitrary, he suggested 50 megawatts would better align with consensus already emerging at the state and RTO level, noting that PJM's board of managers adopted that figure in January. He noted that even 50 megawatts is substantial and said the definition deserves closer examination going forward. He closed by broadening the conversation beyond electricity bill impacts, noting that large loads also raise concerns about water quantity and quality, soil contamination, and air pollution. Echoing comments from Rep. McClellan, he argued the committee needs to look at the full picture of impacts and develop a comprehensive plan that serves consumers and the broader public.

H.R. 9340, Ratepayer Protection Act, was agreed to favorably by a voice vote.

H.R. 6633, High-Capacity Grid Act

Fedorchak Amendment 01 to H.R. 6633, High-Capacity Grid Act

Rep. Julie Fedorchak (R-ND) focused on the core purpose of her bill, the High-Capacity Grid Act, rather than the amendment. She described transmission costs as the fastest-growing component of electric bills and one of the biggest drivers of rising electricity costs for American families. She cited a Brattle and Energy Information Administration study finding that transmission costs have increased more than 180 percent since 2005, even as generation costs have declined. Rep. Fedorchak emphasized that permitting and constructing new transmission lines can take a decade or more from concept to completion, and that even with permitting reform, new construction alone will not be sufficient to meet rapidly growing demand from manufacturing, data centers, electrification, and population growth. She explained that the bill addresses this gap in three ways: requiring utilities building or rebuilding interstate transmission lines to use the best commercially and economically available conductors whenever practical; incentivizing advanced conductor technologies capable of carrying significantly more electricity on existing structures and rights of way; and protecting ratepayers by preventing utilities from passing the cost of lower-performing conductors on to customers unless clearly justified. Rep. Fedorchak noted that advanced conductors can often double capacity without acquiring new rights of way or waiting for new permits and urged her colleagues to support the bill.

Rep. Doris Matsui (D-CA) spoke in support of the amendment, emphasizing that advanced conductors play an important role in lowering electricity bills by allowing power lines to carry more electricity, effectively expanding grid capacity at a fraction of the cost of building new transmission lines or power plants. She framed this as one of several smaller solutions that collectively help reduce costs for American families. She thanked Rep. Fedorchak for leading the bill and committee staff for working with her office on it, said the legislation has moved in a positive direction, and expressed interest in continuing to refine it going forward.

H.R. 6633, High-Capacity Grid Act, as amended, was agreed to favorably by a voice vote.

H.R. 6529, Protecting Families from AI Data Center Energy Costs Act

Castor Amendment 01 to H.R. 6529, Protecting Families from AI Data Center Energy Costs Act

Ranking Member Kathy Castor (D-FL) thanked Rep. Landsman for drafting the bill, which would require FERC to hold a technical conference on protecting American families and small businesses from increased costs associated with data centers. She noted that while FERC took a step last week toward establishing rules for connecting data centers to the grid, the commissioners themselves acknowledged they still need more information, and said a technical conference would complement those orders and ensure commissioners have the right perspectives as they evaluate grid operator proposals in the coming months. Ranking Member Castor noted the amendment sharpens the bill's focus to ensure FERC concentrates on matters within its own jurisdiction rather than areas reserved for the states. She urged colleagues to support both the amendment and the underlying bill and yielded back.

Castor Amendment 01 to H.R. 6529, Protecting Families from AI Data Center Energy Costs Act was agreed to favorably by a voice vote.

H.R. 6529, Protecting Families from AI Data Center Energy Costs Act, as amended, was agreed to favorably by a voice vote.

H.R. 2986, Expediting Generator Interconnection Procedures Act of 2025

Castor Amendment 01 to H.R. 2986, Expediting Generator Interconnection Procedures Act of 2025

Ranking Member Kathy Castor (D-FL) explained that her amendment directs FERC to immediately initiate a show cause proceeding for each transmission provider, finding that delays beyond 15 months for generator interconnection agreements are unjust and unreasonable, and requiring FERC to make a final finding within one year. If transmission providers fail to meet the 15-month standard, FERC would be required to intervene. The amendment also directs the Department of Energy to study best practices for generator interconnection management, including lessons applicable to regions without organized wholesale electricity markets. Ranking Member Castor highlighted MISO's automated interconnection process as an example of the innovation the bill would encourage, noting it replicated in ten days a study that previously took two years. She urged her colleagues to support the amendment and expressed her commitment to advancing the legislation in a bipartisan manner.

Chairman Bob Latta (R-OH) thanked Ranking Member Castor for her amendment to the Expediting Generator Interconnection Procedures Act, which sets an overarching policy goal that interconnection timelines should not extend beyond fifteen months while preserving discretion for each region to design its own interconnection procedures, respecting regional differences and a bottom-up approach to electricity policy. He said all members recognize the urgency of interconnecting new resources quickly to address the ongoing reliability crisis and maintain U.S. leadership in the next-generation economy. However, he noted the underlying legislation needs further process and due diligence to fully understand its potential impact and may require revisions. While not yet able to fully support the bill in its current form, he expressed willingness to continue working with Rep. Castor and Democratic colleagues toward a bipartisan compromise, urged support for the amendment, and yielded back.

Castor Amendment 01 to H.R. 2986, Expediting Generator Interconnection Procedures Act of 2025 was agreed to favorably by a voice vote.

H.R. 2986, Expediting Generator Interconnection Procedures Act of 2025 was agreed to favorably by a voice vote.

H.R. 9338, Pipeline Safety Authorization Act of 2026

Rep. Randy Weber (R-TX) explained that his bill would reauthorize the Pipeline Hazardous Material Safety Administration for the next five years. He outlined the changes that this bill has

undergone since reviewing the discussion draft in March. He noted that these reforms were a result of bipartisan collaboration with committee members and stakeholders. He noted that this legislation would provide PHMSA with the necessary resources and directions to safeguard the millions of miles of pipeline infrastructure across the country. Rep. Weber argued that the bill's focus on promoting best state practices and maintaining a PHMSA cost-benefit analysis focused on domestic safety factors would strengthen pipeline safety across the board. He noted that pipeline infrastructure operates at all times and transports energy that supports both Americans and allies abroad. He asserted that pipelines were a foundational aspect of American infrastructure and brought up his district's role in transmitting energy through the robust pipeline infrastructure they have. Rep. Weber stated that America's energy dominance relied upon their ability to deliver energy safety and reliably to industries and homes that rely upon it each and every day.

Full Committee Ranking Member Frank Pallone (D-NJ) noted that a pipeline safety reauthorization is now nearly three years overdue. He outlined Democratic concerns with the legislation, including insufficient funding authorization for PHMSA, failure to reauthorize a grant program funded by the bipartisan infrastructure law that has helped municipal utilities upgrade their pipelines, and language he argued could criminalize protected First Amendment activities. He expressed particular concern over provisions granting the Department of Justice broad discretion in determining what constitutes interference with pipeline operations, stating that Democrats could not support ambiguous language that risks penalizing Americans for exercising their First Amendment rights. Ranking Member Pallone noted that a colleague from New York has an amendment addressing this issue and urged members to support it. He acknowledged that no final bill will be perfect but expressed hope that negotiations could produce a product all members can support, including through discussions with the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and examination of a Senate-passed bill. He cautioned that without a satisfactory resolution, Republicans on the committee would fail for a second consecutive Congress to advance pipeline safety legislation.

Full Committee Chairman Brett Guthrie (R-KY) appreciated the Ranking Member's comments. He explained that if a person physically breaks a pipeline during a protest, that counts as a criminal act. He noted that the bill was trying to address how actions that impact a pipeline's functions, such as turning it off, should be considered within the law. He clarified that the legislation was not trying to interfere with a person's right to protest and was more focused on deliberate actions that impact the operations of a pipeline. Full Committee Chairman Guthrie said he would be willing to work with members to craft language that does not criminalize protestors.

Rep. Lizzie Fletcher (D-TX) emphasized the importance of pipeline safety legislation to her constituents in Houston, noting that companies in her district control more than 58 percent of U.S. natural gas pipeline capacity and 33 percent of U.S. oil pipeline capacity. She argued that effective pipeline safety depends on a strong working relationship between industry and government regulators, but expressed concern that PHMSA has been left struggling to fulfill its statutory obligations due to the Trump administration's staffing cuts and deregulatory actions, with more than half of PHMSA's senior leadership having departed since the start of the

administration. Rep. Fletcher acknowledged progress in the current draft but said more work is needed to ensure PHMSA has adequate resources. She echoed concerns raised by others about language granting broad DOJ discretion over what constitutes interference with pipeline operations, arguing that any final bill must protect pipeline safety without infringing on Americans' First Amendment rights. Rep. Fletcher also called for the reauthorization to include a bipartisan technology pilot program from the 2020 pipeline safety bill that advances high-tech inspection technologies and analytics, noting the program is included in the Senate's reauthorization legislation and urged its inclusion in the final House product.

Rep. Doris Matsui (D-CA) spoke in opposition to the bill. She noted that while pipeline safety was important, the bill as it was currently written did not meet this moment. She explained that the Trump administration has gutted PHMSA, resulting in a plummet of enforcing pipeline safety. Rep. Matsui also argued that PHMSA has been turned into a political weapon, noting how President Trump has invoked PHMSA in California to force the restart of offshore oil drilling. She expressed her concerns over the bill ignoring environmental impacts and allowing oil companies to prosecute protestors. She said she hoped that the committee would continue to work on and improve the legislation before the full committee markup.

Ocasio-Cortez Amendment 01 to H.R. 9338, Pipeline Safety Authorization Act of 2026

Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY) introduced an amendment to strike Section 6 of H.R. 9338, the Pipeline Safety Authorization Act of 2026, citing concerns about its impact on First Amendment rights. She noted that existing law already imposes penalties of up to 20 years in federal prison for knowingly and willfully damaging a pipeline, but argued that the bill's additional language covering anyone who "impairs the operation of a pipeline" is problematic because the term "impair" is undefined and broad enough to encompass nonviolent protest as a federal felony. Rep. Ocasio-Cortez emphasized that pipeline projects frequently generate community opposition and protest activity and argued that the undefined language poses an unacceptable risk to protected speech. She urged her colleagues to support the amendment as negotiations on the full bill continue.

Rep. Randy Weber (R-TX) clarified that Section 6 of the bill ensured that individuals who knowingly and willfully engaged in the activities like those were prosecuted under the full extent of the law, meaning they could protest but could not cause damage to the product or facility.

Full Committee Chairman Brett Guthrie (R-KY) declined to support the amendment but acknowledged the underlying concern, agreeing that the term "impair" needs a clearer definition before the bill advances to full committee. He noted that a 20-year felony sentence is a significant penalty and expressed his commitment to working with colleagues to craft more precise language that targets harmful interference with pipeline operations without capturing protected activity.

Full Committee Ranking Member Frank Pallone (D-NJ) urged his colleagues to support the amendment. He argued that there is a lack of public trust in DOJ, referencing the arrests of protectors at the Reflecting Pool. He noted that while he did understand Full Committee

Chairman Guthrie's comments on damaging pipelines, the language needed to be more precise so that people were not unnecessarily arrested. He urged the committee to work further on this issue.

Rep. Jake Auchincloss (D-MA) questioned Vice Chairman Weber on a provision he argued is drafted too broadly, citing low trust in the administration's potential application of the language. He acknowledged the shared goal of protecting pipeline infrastructure from physical interference while preserving the right to protest, but pressed on why new language was necessary given that trespass and destruction-of-property laws already exist. He asked specifically what gap in current law the provision was meant to address, including whether existing law already covers physically blocking worker access to a worksite.

Vice Chairman Weber (R-TX) agreed that physically contacting or damaging a pipeline would already constitute trespass under current law, but drew an analogy to protests outside schools, protesters can be present but cannot block doors and prevent students from entering, suggesting the bill aims to address a similar distinction without limiting the right to protest itself. He acknowledged that bipartisan negotiations are ongoing to refine the language and avoid unintended First Amendment consequences, and said the amendment under discussion was not necessary at this stage, encouraging colleagues to vote against it while signaling continued work on the underlying provision.

Rep. Marc Veasey (D-TX) expressed concern about potential misuse of the bill's pipeline interference language by the current administration. He asked Chairman Guthrie whether the committee would be willing to state on the record that it was not the intent of the legislation for individuals to be arrested solely for exercising their First Amendment rights, should the administration attempt to use the provision in that manner.

Full Committee Chairman Brett Guthrie (R-KY) responded that no one should be arrested for their first amendment right but noted legislation should address incidents where a pipeline is damaged. He agreed that the use of the term "impair" can be twisted by future administrations and expressed his willingness to work with the committee to better define this term so DOJ can be more clearly directed.

Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY) thanked the chairman for his willingness to work collaboratively on refining the provision's language, and said that in the spirit of that ongoing negotiation to protect people's right to express themselves, she would withdraw the amendment as discussions continue ahead of full committee.

Ocasio-Cortez Amendment 01 to H.R. 9338, Pipeline Safety Authorization Act of 2026 was withdrawn.

H.R. 9338, Pipeline Safety Authorization Act of 2026 was agreed to favorably by a voice vote.

Chairman Latta brought the hearing to a close.