



Committee: House Energy & Commerce Subcommittee on Energy
Event: [Protecting America's Energy Infrastructure in Today's Cyber and Physical Threat Landscape](#)
Date: January 13, 2026

Executive Summary:

Members focused on the value of the Department of Energy's (DOE) Office of Cybersecurity, Energy Security, and Emergency Response's (CESER) Energy Threat Analysis Center (ETAC), state energy security plans, and the Rural & Municipal Utility Cybersecurity program. Democrats used the hearing to elevate their concerns regarding DOE funding and staffing cuts, while Republicans focused on the need for dispatchable energy and improved security.

Member Toplines:

[Chair Bob Latta \(R-OH-05\)](#): Latta emphasized that grid security is critical as energy demand grows, noting that digitization and other technological innovations have increased cybersecurity risks. He reported that the Energy Emergency Leadership Act ([H.R. ___](#)) clarifies that a DOE Assistant Secretary will oversee energy emergency and cyber functions. He noted the importance of the Pipeline Cybersecurity Preparedness Act ([H.R. ___](#)) and the Energy Threat Analysis Center (ETAC) Act of 2026 ([H.R. ___](#)), the latter which would reauthorize ETAC, improving information sharing and coordinated threat analysis. He also highlighted the Rural and Municipal Utility Cybersecurity Act ([H.R. ___](#)), which would reauthorize the program, thereby improving cybersecurity protocols and equipment for small utilities, electric co-operatives, and public power agencies through targeted funding and technical assistance. Latta noted that these small entities do not have the same resources as their larger, investor-owned peers. He also shared that he would reintroduce the SECURE Grid Act ([H.R. ___](#)) with Rep. **Doris Matsui** (D-CA-07).

*Ranking Member Kathy Castor (D-FL-14)*¹: Castor emphasized that President **Donald Trump's** policies threaten grid reliability and security, citing arbitrary project cancellations and mounting costs. She pointed to the Trump administration's repeated attacks against renewable energy projects, including the cancellation of the Esmeralda 7 solar project in Nevada last fall. She also highlighted the administration's termination of five offshore wind (OSW) projects in December, arguing that these actions place jobs and investment at risk. She reported that Revolution Wind was 87 percent complete, with 58 of 65 turbines installed, and was meant to be fully operational by the end of 2026. Finally, she referenced Monday's federal court ruling that Revolution Wind may continue to pursue offshore construction.

¹ Ranking Member Castor & Chair Guthrie's opening statements were not online at the time of this memo's composition.

Full Committee Chair Brett Guthrie (R-KY-02): Guthrie opened by highlighting a variety of recent cyberattack incidents targeting energy infrastructure across the world. He emphasized the importance of the bipartisan bills at hand in securing the grid and bolstering cybersecurity, particularly for smaller, rural utilities that do not have the resources of larger, investor-owned utilities.

Full Committee Ranking Member Frank Pallone (D-NJ-06): Pallone noted that offensive cyber weapons continue to proliferate and advance, and he emphasized the importance of the aforementioned bipartisan bills. He noted that the ETAC Act of 2026 is new, having been inspired by testimony from last year. He raised concern that the Trump Administration's actions threaten energy reliability, affordability, and security through project cancellations and the passage of the *One Big Beautiful Bill*. He noted that the DOE is now understaffed, with the Office of Nuclear Energy asking for volunteers to review novel nuclear reactor designs. He underscored the need for insight into the DOE's reorganization.

Witness Toplines: Panel One

Alex Fitzsimmons, Acting Undersecretary of Energy & Director of the Office of Cybersecurity, Energy Security & Emergency Response (CESER), DOE: Fitzsimmons explained that ETAC is a public-private partnership that identifies and mitigates energy infrastructure threats and noted that the bill will improve operational collaboration and protect information sharing, thereby bolstering the nation's energy security. He argued that the RMUC Reauthorization Act will enable CESER to strengthen cybersecurity for electric, public power, and cooperative utilities, and he emphasized that these rural utilities are vulnerable to cyber attacks due to a lack of funding and personnel. On the SECURE Grid Act, he explained that the bill will facilitate state analysis of energy infrastructure via state energy security plans and formalize data requirements. Fitzsimmons concluded that CESER is available as a resource to support the legislative process.

Major Takeaways:

DOE & CESER Staffing & Functions

- Chair Latta asked if DOE had sufficient staffing to carry out the bills' responsibilities; Fitzsimmons affirmed.
- Chair Latta had Fitzsimmons discuss the value of DOE in leading energy response efforts. Fitzsimmons attested to the value of CESER and noted their technical expertise and status as a non-regulator, which has facilitated trust with the private sector.
 - Rep. **Randy Weber** (R-TX-14) similarly asked how CESER works with industry; Fitzsimmons reiterated that they lead voluntary programs and information sharing as a non-regulator, citing ETAC and subsector councils, but acknowledged that the DOE can do more.
- Ranking Member Castor noted that the DOE forcing coal plants to stay open has cost consumers and asked if he drafted the related emergency order language. Fitzsimmons confirmed.
- Rep. **Rob Menendez** (D-NJ-08) asked how the DOE is involved in running Venezuela. Fitzsimmons replied that DOE Secretary **Chris Wright** is working to implement a

“historic energy deal” and asserted that DOE involvement is not straining the department’s capacity, even though there was a 20 percent reduction in staff.

- Rep. **Mariannette Miller-Meeks** (R-IA-02) flagged that there is approximately \$160 million remaining in the Rural & Municipal Utility Cybersecurity program, with less than a year left. She asked how the funding will be obligated. Fitzsimmons shared that the DOE is moving forward with completing the first tranche of contracts.
- Rep. **Kim Schrier** (D-WA-08) noted that the Bonneville Power Administration has suffered as a result of DOE firings, despite being self-funded, as they have not hired anyone since the hiring freeze was lifted. She underscored the need to expedite the hiring process.
- Democrats, including Menendez, Reps. **Diana DeGette** (D-CO-01), and **Paul Tonko** (D-NY-20) asked why the Trump Administration canceled billions in grid resilience funding. Fitzsimmons defended DOE’s “rigorous review process.” Fitzsimmons offered to follow up with staff on specific projects.
 - Veasey raised the cancellation of the Exxon Mobil and Eastman Chemical projects and asked how gutting Texas’ manufacturing protects infrastructure. Fitzsimmons again defended the review process.

Grid Strain & Data Centers

- Republicans, including Weber and Rep. **Gary Palmer** (R-AL-06), stressed mounting strain on the grid, particularly with hydrocarbon plant retirements.
 - Fitzsimmons underscored that the energy system must be able to meet peak seasonal demands and reported that NERC has called the current grid situation a “five alarm fire,” attributing the situation to the “energy subtraction policies of the previous Administration” that led to dispatchable energy retirement. He underscored the need for dispatchable energy, including nuclear, gas, coal, batteries, hydropower, and geothermal, to meet peak demand, emphasizing that reserve margins are shrinking as energy demand grows.
 - Relatedly, Chair Guthrie had Fitzsimmons explain CESER’s 202C orders.
- Rep. **Jennifer McClellan** (D-VA-04) asked if efforts to mitigate the impact of data centers on regional and local grids will also mitigate energy shortages. Fitzsimmons agreed that balancing supply and demand in the energy system is a good thing.
 - McClellan called Virginia the “data capital center of the globe.” She expressed concern at cancellation of the *Inflation Reduction Act* and *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act* grants, noting that Virginia lost a \$85.4 million grant to study ways grid enhanced technology could be used to reduce data center impacts. She noted that another canceled Virginia grant was meant to develop and deploy grid transmission monitoring technology that would have improved grid flexibility.

Renewable Energy

- Democrats, including Ranking Members Castor and Pallone, called attention to the wrongful renewable energy project terminations, noting that the Administration’s actions are further compounding the energy emergency.
 - Fitzsimmons insisted that DOE projects are constantly reviewed for national security and are technically and financially feasible.

- Rep. **Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez** (D-NY-14) flagged that cancelled energy projects have led to hundreds of thousands of lost jobs and asked if the DOE had assessed this information prior. He did not answer the question.
- Ranking Member Pallone asked if Fitzsimmons supported an “all-of-the-above” energy strategy and he answered yes, caveating for resources that can “compete on a level playing field.” Ranking Member Pallone noted that this answer differs from DOE Secretary Wright’s response.
 - Rep. **Scott Peters** (D-CA-50) pointed out the hypocrisy in “level playing field” when wind projects must now wait on Secretary of Interior approval for each step of the permitting process. He pushed back on the need for natural gas, citing the use of solar and batteries to reduce Texas’ grid blackouts.
- Rep. **Marc Veasey** (D-TX-33) asked how America is faring when it comes to being a leader in renewable energy. Fitzsimmons acknowledged growth in solar and storage capacity, but then again cited the need for dispatchable energy.
- Rep. **Cliff Bentz** (R-OR-02) asserted that the East Coast does not have transmission to support new wind power, prompting Fitzsimmons to advocate for dispatchable energy, in addition to increasing transmission strategically.

Security

- Chair Latta asked if CESER shares information on threats quickly, especially with small utilities. Fitzsimmons answered yes, but underscored that the DOE could do more.
- Chair Guthrie asked if China could use artificial intelligence (AI) to disrupt our energy systems. Fitzsimmons confirmed and highlighted the importance of funding CESER’s AI for Operationally Resilient Technologies & Systems (AI-FORTS) program.
- Peters highlighted the pertinence of the Fix Our Forests Act ([H.R. 471](#)) and had Fitzsimmons discuss how ETAC can make utility infrastructure more resilient to wildfire risk. Fitzsimmons cited the value of ETAC’s quick reporting mechanisms, noting they are co-located with industry partners and therefore collaborate in real time.
- Rep. **Rick Allen** (R-GA-12) asked about the role of national labs in grid security. Fitzsimmons replied that CESER partners with the national laboratories to test products and share energy threat information with the private sector. He highlighted Citrix, which is a program that facilitates grid component cyber vulnerability assessments.
 - Rep. **Diana DeGette** (D-CO-01) asked if Fitzsimmons was aware of grant cancellations to the National Lab of the Rockies. He defended the cuts.
- Reps. **Troy Balderson** (R-OH-12) and **Craig Goldman** (R-TX-12) had Fitzsimmons discuss cybersecurity risk to the production and delivery of natural gas. Fitzsimmons acknowledged growing threats, but noted that he could not elaborate in a non-classified setting on specifics. He explained that the DOE has an oil and gas subsector to facilitate security coordination.
- Balderson asked about DOE’s goals for ETAC. Fitzsimmons noted that 80 percent of U.S. energy infrastructure is privately owned and operated, necessitating ETAC’s facilitation of information sharing.
- Balderson had Fitzsimmons explain why it’s important that the SECURE Grid Act mandate that state energy security plans consider threats to local distribution lines, in addition to supply chain and weather vulnerabilities. Fitzsimmons emphasized the need

for holistic security and resilience, flagging that transmission to homes and businesses is especially vulnerable.

- Rep. **August Pfluger** (R-TX-11) raised Chinese solar and battery inverter security concerns and highlighted his letter to Commerce, urging action to protect the grid from “high risk foreign technologies.” He asked how CESER monitors inverter and other grid equipment risk. Fitzsimmons acknowledged that country of origin matters, but stressed the importance of testing components via Citrix, which is a multi-lab effort that meets regularly.
 - Miller-Meeks also returned to this topic and asked how CESER is mitigating battery energy storage system component risk.
- Rep. **Nick Langworthy** (R-NY-23) asked how CESER works with small, rural utilities. Fitzsimmons attested to the value of the RMUC program.
 - Rep. **John Joyce** (R-PA-13) again raised RMUC; Fitzsimmons noted that these small facilities do not have large security operation centers, but still face the same threats, prompting the need for federal support to strengthen cybersecurity.
- Rep. **Julie Fedorchak** (R-ND-AL) asked how the DOE is preparing the energy sector for a cyberattack. Fitzsimmons responded that CESER hosts blue sky training with relevant stakeholders, including grid operators, local communities, and energy sectors, as well as an annual “clear path” session to analyze risk scenarios.

Witness Toplines: Panel Two

[Scott I. Aaronson, Senior Vice President, Energy Security and Industry Operations,](#)

[Edison Electric Institute:](#) Aronson noted that the grid is experiencing heightened electricity demand and is changing with more distributed resources, digitization, and two way flows. He emphasized the importance of mutual assistance in light of increased risk and highlighted Edison’s support of ETAC, the Electricity Information Sharing Analysis Center, and Citrix.

[Adrienne Lotto, Senior Vice President of Grid Security, Technical and Operations Services,](#)

[American Public Power Association \(APPA\):](#) Lotto noted that grid security depends on enforceable standards, public-private partnerships that facilitate information sharing, and defense. He expressed his support for the reauthorization of RMUC, the release of the Critical Infrastructure Partnership Advisory Council replacement, and regulatory harmonization.

[Nathaniel J. Melby, Ph.D., Vice President & Chief Information Officer, Dairyland](#)

[Power, on behalf of National Rural Electric Cooperative Association \(NRECA\):](#) Melby spoke in favor of RMUC reauthorization, explaining how Dairyland relies on the program. He expressed support for the bill, noting that the text gives DOE greater flexibility to award funding faster.

[Rebecca O’Neil, Research Principal, Infrastructure, Energy & Environment Directorate, Pacific](#)

[Northwest National Laboratory \(PNNL\)](#) : O’Neil explained that she leads a research team to support CESER and states and territories in delivering complete energy security plans. She attested to the value of the SECURE Grid Act and provided an overview of the energy security plan design process.

Major Takeaways:

RMUC

- Chair Latta had Melby discuss how small cooperatives depend on trained personnel. Melby cited the value of partnerships with federal agencies, which provide support and facilitate skill development.
- Republicans, including Weber and Balderson, asked how rural co-ops balanced the need for cyber and physical security upgrades without placing undue financial burden on their members. Melby shared that inter co-op collaboration, as well as state partnerships, help offset the cost. He and Melby attested to the value of ETAC and RMUC.
- Rep. **Diana Harshbarger** (R-TN-01) asked Lotto what further work can be supported by RMUC through its reauthorization. Lotto noted that APPA is waiting to negotiate an additional two million dollar award, which would help 19 public power utilities improve their cyber incident assessment and response capabilities.
- Joyce asked how RMUC can be improved. Melby underscored the importance of improving the timeliness of fund availability to implement needed technologies.

Security

- Democrats, including Menendez, Matsui, and Schrier, had O'Neil discuss the value of state energy security plans. O'Neil explained that states must map out their state's energy landscape, including identifying and locating energy suppliers and their respective supply contribution, and must execute a risk inventory and analysis. As a result of the plans, she shared that states were able to increase energy security staffing and pass needed funding.
- Miller-Meeks highlighted the transformer attack in North Carolina and asked about supply chain concerns. Aaronson attested to the value of the Spare Transformer Equipment Program, emphasizing the need to invest in backup equipment for products that have long lead times.
- McClellan asked how the national labs are working on AI security. O'Neil reiterated the value of AI-FORTS, as well as Citrix, and general technical assistance to states.
- Balderson had Aaronson elaborate on the value of ETAC, despite its limited number of participants. Aaronson noted that the program has grown from four to 17 participants and attested to the value of information sharing.