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**Committee:** Senate Energy & Natural Resources Committee Democrats

**Event:** [Energy Affordability Roundtable](#)

**Date:** January 29, 2026

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***Executive Summary:***

Today's roundtable focused on the energy affordability crisis, with Democrats zeroing in on the impact of the stop work order on offshore wind (OSW) projects, the value of renewable energy, and the need for demand side solutions.

***Member Toplines:***

*Ranking Member Martin Heinrich (D-NM)*<sup>1</sup>: Heinrich underscored that today's roundtable is meant to address the energy affordability crisis, which has been created by this administration. He highlighted that energy prices have risen 13 percent since President **Donald Trump** took office, while energy demand is growing at an unprecedented rate. He highlighted the de facto ban on wind and solar development on federal land, which has effectively stalled 22 GW from coming onto the grid and inhibits the completion of another 16 GW of projects. He reported that the OSW stop work order in December and the "wholesale greenlighting" of natural gas exports has contributed to mounting energy prices, noting that residential gas prices more than doubled in 2025. He argued that coal plant retirement delays will further increase rates for consumers.

***Witness Toplines:***

*Mark Wolfe, Executive Director of the National Energy Assistance Directors Association & Co-Director of the Center on Energy Policy and Poverty:* Wolfe focused on the value of the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), reporting that one in six households is now behind on utility bills. He noted that rising electricity prices are a product of a failing system, including an outdated grid, increased data center demand, and increased liquified natural gas (LNG) exports, which are contributing to a surge in domestic prices.

*Mayor Shawyn Patterson-Howard, Mt. Vernon, New York:* Patterson-Howard reported that electricity prices in Westchester County are some of the highest nationally. She detailed her city's approach to energy efficiency and their mayoral coalition efforts to negotiate Con Edison's rate increases. She stressed the need for investment in efficiency and renewable energy.

*Patrick Crowley, President, Rhode Island AFL-CIO:* Crowley shared that Rhode Island's labor has worked to bring OSW to the Northeast, noting that the projects are a great source of high-paying, union jobs. He noted that the Trump administration has issued two stop work

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<sup>1</sup> Opening statements were not available online at the time of this memo's composition and distribution.

orders against Revolution Wind, despite it being near completion and its ability to power 350,000 homes. He shared ISO-New England's report that delaying this project places grid stability at risk. He underscored that the labor movement supports seeing OSW projects to completion.

*Alfonso Martinez, Business Manager, IBEW Local Union 611:* Martinez shared that the *Inflation Reduction Act* (IRA) made clean energy development union friendly and underscored that President Trump's funding freezes and rescissions threaten union jobs and energy prices.

*Scott Libby, Owner, Royal River Heat Pumps:* Libby reported that heat pump demand has dropped with the rollback of the installation tax credit and that his business has been constrained by higher input costs, citing upward pressure on copper prices due to data center demand. He attested to the value of heat pumps, underscoring their effectiveness and energy efficiency. He reiterated that gas exports are driving LNG price increases.

*Ari Matusiak, President, Rewiring America:* Matusiak attested to energy demand driven by data centers. He reported that 50 to 100 percent of data center energy demand can be met by households via the installation of rooftop solar, batteries, and heatpumps, which can alleviate pressure on the grid. He stressed the importance of federal rebate programs, virtual power plants, and requiring data centers to invest in household technology to alleviate pressure on energy prices.

*Paula Glover, President Alliance to Save Energy:* Glover emphasized the importance of energy efficiency and noted that demand side solutions have been neglected. She reiterated the need for virtual power plants and federal rebates.

### **Major Takeaways:**

#### Renewable Energy

- Sen. **Jack Reed** (D-RI) had Crowley elaborate on how the stop work order has impacted labor. Crowley expressed concern that market instability will lead to developers' departure, impacting jobs, and highlighted that Revolution Wind's energy is significantly more affordable, at 10 cents a kilowatt (KW).
  - Sen. **Catherine Cortez Masto** (D-NV) returned to this topic and flagged the value of construction jobs.
- Sen. **Sheldon Whitehouse** (D-RI) reported that renewable energy is more affordable, citing evidence in legal documents and affidavits, written contracts, ISO operators, and pointed to the Texas grid as a successful case study. He underscored that the Trump administration's attacks on renewables are a product of the fossil fuel lobby, which donated millions of dollars to his campaign.
- Sen. **Angus King** (I-ME) noted that utilities are not incentivized to invest in grid enhancing technology (GET) and expressed his support for demand pricing. He reiterated that solar and wind energy are the cheapest energy sources and that storage has become increasingly affordable.

### Energy Efficiency Rebates

- Reed had Matusiak attest to the value of rebate programs, which Matusiak explained that they can reduce upfront costs by up to 60 percent, making efficient technology affordable for homeowners.
- Sen. **Peter Welch** (D-VT) asked Matusiak how demand-side solutions can be implemented. Matusiak advocated for programmatic collaboration between the utility, local implementers, and hyperscaler financial support to drive household upgrades.
- Sen. **Mazie Hirono** (D-HI) expressed interest in incorporating households into grid strategy and initially had Glover and Matusiak elaborate on conducive state law and efficiency upgrades.
  - Crowley highlighted the value of the Solar for All program, which was cut by the Trump administration. Patterson-Howard advocated for federal incentives for solar, heat pumps, and LEED certification to ensure that new housing is efficient.
- Sen. **Brian Schatz** (D-HI) noted that IRA projects were hindered by bureaucratic delays and expressed his support for speed to market. Patterson-Howard expressed her support for technology adoption incentives.
- Cortez Masto noted that energy prices in Nevada have remained lower due to their investments in energy efficiency, as well as solar and geothermal. She reported that she is releasing a bill today<sup>2</sup> to reinstate efficiency rebate programs that were cut by the *One Big Beautiful Bill*.

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<sup>2</sup> The bill was not yet released at the time of this memo's composition.