

Committee on Energy and Commerce

**Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Subcommittee on Energy Chairman Bobby L. Rush**

Hearing on “The CLEAN Future Act: Powering a Resilient and Prosperous America”

March 24, 2021

Good afternoon. Today, the Subcommittee on Energy will hold a legislative hearing as a continuation of the Committee’s work to address recent grid failures in the South Central region of the United States. This morning, the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations held a hearing to identify the nature of this problem. We now convene to identify policies that will relaunch much-needed federal grid investment in the wake of these tragic failures.

In February, extremely frigid, Chicago-like temperatures spread across the South Central region resulting in historically high energy demand and disastrously low energy supply. This sharp energy decline was a result of every single source of power supply underperforming during the extreme weather event. Further, every single source of power supply underperformed as a consequence of poor planning, deregulation by states, and negligible weatherization practices. These widespread outages threatened the health and safety of millions of Americans — and particularly Texans —amid the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

It is incumbent on this Committee to use its broad jurisdiction over national energy policy to identify federal solutions to prevent a disruption in vital energy services from occurring again. This Committee has prioritized legislative solutions in response to these types of events under both Democratic and Republican majorities, and the outages in Texas are no exception to this standard. Just last year, the Subcommittee on Energy held a hearing on the California wildfires and, during the Republican majority, Democrats also participated in a bipartisan hearing to restore Puerto Rico’s electric infrastructure after Hurricane Maria.

In this same vein, expert witnesses are called before us today to discuss policies to deeply decarbonize our economy and strengthen our infrastructure against threats, like climate change. Federal investment to prevent these matters is of great importance considering the recent tragedy in Texas and the need to secure our nation’s energy systems by and large. The CLEAN Future Act, which I introduced with Chairmen Pallone and Tonko, with contributions from esteemed members of this Committee, aims to upgrade and reinforce our energy infrastructure to those ends.

For example, title II of the CLEAN Future Act establishes funding for a variety of grid resiliency measures to include crucial equipment replacements, microgrids, and programs to provide distributed energy systems and solar power within underserved and disadvantaged communities. The bill also bolsters transmission infrastructure in order to deliver clean energy to areas with high electricity demand. Energy efficiency is also critical to a resilient and reliable

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grid. The CLEAN Future Act includes cost-effective, demand-reducing energy efficiency provisions that will lighten the load on our grid.

Climate change poses a real, ever-present threat. Today's policy discussion is an important step in fine-tuning federal solutions to secure a resilient and reliable energy system in the face of those threats, and I look forward to a productive conversation. And with that, I yield to my friend and colleague, the gentleman from Michigan, Ranking Member Upton.