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ONE HUNDRED SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE

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March 17, 2021

Frank Pallone
Chairman
House Committee on Energy and Commerce
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Pallone,

We saw that the Committee has noticed upcoming legislative and oversight hearings, in addition to previous letters, concerning the emergency situation in Texas last month. We ask that you broaden the scope of these upcoming activities to ensure that we work towards solutions, and not continue just making political points. For example, Members should hear a variety of perspectives from witnesses around the country. It is imperative that we address the energy emergency events that millions of Americans have had to face – not only in Texas, but in California, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Arkansas. The Committee has worked in a bipartisan way many times previously and we want to continue that working relationship to produce the best results for the American people.

While it is important to review what happened in Texas, we must conduct our work on emergency energy situations comprehensively. We should review events across the country with an eye towards applying lessons-learned. The record winter power demand and freezing conditions seen throughout Texas and the south-central U.S. in February remain extremely rare events; however, other states, like California, regularly experience energy failures. Indeed, California residents experience blackouts on an ongoing, annual basis as the State fails to manage summer electricity demand and wildfire risks. Meanwhile, the Texas state legislature has been working in a bipartisan way to review the recent events and develop productive solutions. We urge you to do the same. These issues are too important – we must put people over politics and work together on solutions to modernize and harden our electric grid.

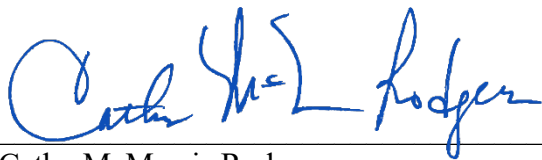
These recent emergencies underscore the importance of grid reliability and resilience. The February extreme cold weather brought snow, ice, and extreme cold temperatures from the Canadian border as far south as Texas, driving record winter power demand and affecting all generation sources. The Electric Reliability Council of Texas (ERCOT), the Southwest Power

Pool (SPP), and the Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO) implemented power outages across Texas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Arkansas that affected almost 5 million customers at its peak.

In August 2020, the California Independent System Operator (CAISO) implemented power outages in California due to electricity shortages in the midst of a heat wave. For the past 3 years, California has endured regular, preemptive power shutoffs in an attempt to reduce wildfire risks during strong and dry winds. According to at least one California utility, California residents could face up to 10 years of widespread, precautionary power shutoffs. Yet the Committee under your leadership has not sent letters or convened hearings since last summer on California's challenges. Congressional oversight on the causes of and the solutions to these California shutoffs is needed.

All these events raise significant questions about the reliability and resilience of the Nation's electricity grid and preparation for all hazards – from extreme weather to wildfires to cyber threats. The Energy and Commerce Committee should be asking questions of a broad set of stakeholders from across the country to gather facts and explore ways to address these complex issues. We urge you to do just that – examine these energy emergency situations more broadly so that the people of Texas, California, and other impacted states can get answers – and do so in the great tradition of bipartisanship we all appreciate and value on the Energy and Commerce Committee.

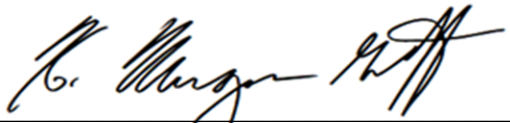
Sincerely,



Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Republican Leader
Committee on Energy and Commerce



Fred Upton
Member of Congress



H. Morgan Griffith
Member of Congress

CC: Representative Bobby L. Rush
Representative Diana DeGette