

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

October 6, 2026

The Honorable Christopher Wright
Secretary of Energy
U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20585

Dear Secretary Wright,

We write to raise serious concerns about the Department of Energy's August 12, 2026, decision to not move forward with three National Interest Electric Transmission Corridors (NIETCs) under review—the Lake Erie–Canada Corridor, the Southwestern Grid Connector Corridor, and the Tribal Energy Access Corridor. We also reiterate our support for taking strong actions to streamline transmission permitting within the Department's authority. Transmission projects like those within the NIETCs are vital to promoting American energy security, electricity affordability for ratepayers, and providing the conditions for U.S. manufacturing sector growth. These recent cancellations – and the lack of a strategy from the department to streamline transmission permitting – are particularly concerning given their impact on the U.S. manufacturing base and our strategic competition with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

This administration has repeatedly stated its objective to foster a domestic manufacturing renaissance¹, but such a revival hinges on the supply of abundant, reliable, and cheap electricity among other factors. Today's grid is underdeveloped, as recognized by the Department's own National Transmission Needs Study draft published in July 2026, which concludes that the country faces a pressing need for additional transmission capacity precisely because of load growth from expanding domestic manufacturing and other large industrial loads.² As one article from 2024 states, "This projected manufacturing growth is one of the key drivers of increasing electricity demand. Peak demand for electricity is projected to grow by 38 GW over the next five years and coupled with a significant shift in the energy mix, the recurring refrain is – the grid is not ready." Another study states that electricity demand from the manufacturing sector will increase five-fold over the next decade.³ Inadequate transmission capacity urgently threatens critical sectors that are vulnerable to disruptions if they cannot secure reliable, low-cost power.⁴

The CCP understands how important energy transmission is to a robust manufacturing base and has prioritized transmission investment and interconnection⁵ as strategic and

¹ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/releases/2025/03/president-trump-positions-u-s-as-global-superpower-in-manufacturing/>

² <https://www.energy.gov/documents/national-transmission-needs-study-draft-july-2026>

³ https://cleanpower.org/wp-content/uploads/gateway/2025/03/US_National_Power_Demand_Study_2025_FINAL-REPORT.pdf

⁴ <https://cleanenergygrid.org/new-report-reveals-u-s-transmission-buildout-lagging-far-behind-national-needs/>

⁵ <https://spectrum.ieee.org/chinas-ambitious-plan-to-build-the-worlds-biggest-supergrid>

instrumental to safeguarding advantages in critical technology and their associated supply chains. According to analysis by the Center for Grid Security at Securing America's Future Energy (SAFE), "Due to a lack of adequate transmission capacity, America's current grid fails to provide affordable and reliable power that can adequately attract critical industries necessary to reducing our dependence on foreign supply chains. Comparatively, China has the transmission to increase energy abundance and affordability, strengthening their influence over global supply chains and their leverage over both allies and adversaries." ⁶ China has planned or completed more than 80 times as much high-voltage transmission interconnection as the United States between 2014 and 2021 and, in 2022 alone, invested \$166 billion in its transmission grid. ⁷ That is more than every other country's grid investment combined.

By contrast, the United States currently requires 10–20 years to bring new transmission infrastructure online. ⁸ The NIETC program – while imperfect and in need of reform – was designed specifically to compress that timeline in cases of documented national need, not to dictate routes or override local input. In contrast, the permitting authorities under the NIETC program pale in comparison to those available to interstate natural gas and oil pipelines. Not using tools under the department's authority does not make the underlying need disappear; it removes one of the few mechanisms built to address transmission permitting at the pace this moment requires. By directing investment toward regions where new transmission capacity yields the greatest reliability, affordability, and national-security benefits, and enabling timely development of strategically important transmission lines, the NIETC program – if reformed, implemented, and executed correctly – would strengthen the nation's energy delivery system, expand opportunities for domestic manufacturers, and reinforce the economic competitiveness of U.S. industry.

New transmission projects – especially those facilitated by the NIETC program – also carry sizeable potential benefits for the domestic manufacturers that this administration claims to prioritize. Grid modernization at this scale would require enormous quantities of steel and American steelmakers are positioned to supply it while supporting American jobs and displacing steel tied to Chinese overcapacity and, in some cases, forced labor. Industry estimates suggest that modernizing the nation's transmission grid could unlock as much as \$7.8 trillion in investment and support more than six million jobs. ⁹ Not streamlining transmission permitting and deprioritizing grid deployment programs like NIETC surrenders an opportunity to rebuild U.S. manufacturing and jobs.

Finally, ratepayers bear the cost of an underdeveloped electricity grid. Residential electricity rates rose an average of 10.2 percent nationwide between March 2025 and March 2026, with some states seeing far steeper increases, and 68 percent of Americans now report that

⁶ <https://secureenergy.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/SAFEs-Center-for-Grid-Security-Fact-Sheet-The-Role-of-Transmission-in-US-Strategic-Competitiveness-with-China.pdf>

⁷ <https://www.energymonitor.ai/networks-grids/weekly-data-grid-investment-in-china-more-than-every-other-country-combined/>

⁸ <https://danielarus.csail.mit.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Opinion-To-compete-with-China-on-AI-we-need-a-lot-more-power-The-Washington-Post.pdf>

⁹ <https://cleanenergygrid.org/new-report-aceg-finds-expanded-transmission-eastern-u-s-creates-jobs-lowers-consumer-costs-reduces-carbon-emissions/>

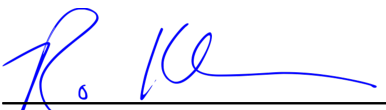
energy bills are straining their household finances.¹⁰ Much of that pain traces directly back to transmission and grid capacity: in the PJM region alone, insufficient capacity to serve surging demand drove up the cost of the grid operator's most recent capacity auctions by more than \$9 billion in one year and over \$7 billion the next, adding as much as 29 percent to some ratepayers' bills.¹¹

Arbitrary cancellations like these set back the U.S. in the strategic race with the CCP, hamstringing a U.S. manufacturing buildout, and drive up costs for American families. To better understand how the Department of Energy reached the decision to cancel these important projects, and their future plans for the NIETC program, we respectfully request answers to the following questions no later than October 26, 2026:

- Please provide a detailed account of any analysis conducted by the Department of the opportunity cost of cancelling the Lake Erie–Canada Corridor, the Southwestern Grid Connector Corridor, and the Tribal Energy Access Corridor, including projected effects on ratepayer costs, grid reliability, and industrial electricity supply in the affected regions.
- Did the Department assess the impact of these cancellations on potential manufacturing and energy-intensive development in the regions associated with these cancelled corridors? Please provide a detailed account of that analysis.
- How does the Department reconcile these cancellations with the findings of its own July 2026 draft National Transmission Needs Study?
- What stakeholder feedback did the Department evaluate when deciding to cancel these NIETC designations and did the Department engage with utilities, regional transmission organizations, or the North American Electric Reliability Corporation?
- What steps, if any, will the Department take to address the transmission needs in these three corridors, or in other transmission constrained areas across the country (especially those identified in the 2026 draft National Transmission Needs Study)?

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



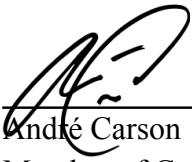
Ro Khanna
Ranking Member
House Select Committee on
the CCP



Scott H. Peters
Member of Congress

¹⁰ <https://www.consumerreports.org/money/utilities/electric-bills-rising-regulators-a2987547643/>

¹¹ <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/a-plan-for-american-electricity-affordability/>

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'AC' with a flourish.

André Carson
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading 'Paul D. Tonko' in a cursive style.

Paul D. Tonko
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading 'Mike Levin' in a cursive style.

Mike Levin
Member of Congress