

**U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources**  
**April 10, 2025 Hearing: *The Griffith & Gil Nominations***  
**Questions for the Record Submitted to Mr. Preston Wells Griffith III**

**Questions for the Record from Ranking Member Martin Heinrich**

**Question 1:** Agrivoltaics, or the co-location of solar energy generation with agricultural production, such as crop or livestock production or pollinator habitats, underneath solar panels or adjacent to solar panels, is providing U.S. farmers and ranchers a new opportunity to diversify their farming operations while contributing to domestic energy production. An essential part of the current scaling of agrivoltaics continues to be public/private research partnerships supported by the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), including partnerships with U.S. Land-grant Universities and private sector organizations across the country. Through DOE programs, like the Foundational Agrivoltaic Research for Megawatt Scale (FARMS) funding program and work through our National Labs, federally supported research has helped the solar industry work with farmers and ranchers to determine optimal mutually beneficial siting, best management practices, and crop selection that allows for the complete integration of a number of agricultural crops such as corn, soybeans, small grains, and specialty crops, as well as sheep, cattle and other livestock to be co-produced with energy production under solar arrays.

The National Renewable Energy Laboratory reports that agrivoltaics projects on nearly 600 sites across the country, including New Mexico, encompassing roughly 60,000 acres produce 10 GW of solar energy. These agrivoltaics projects are contributing to US energy security while also keeping farm families on the land and securing our food systems.

- How can the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee work more closely with the Department of Energy (DOE) to enhance federal policies and research to benefit farmers who are voluntarily choosing to deploy agrivoltaics on their farming and livestock operations?
- If confirmed, how will you ensure DOE is continuing to support these farms and partnerships that are conducting research to identify the most financially viable agrivoltaic models, best practices, and guidance for the integration of agrivoltaics into existing farm operations?

Response: I am aware that the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) explores the co-location of solar energy systems with agricultural land to understand optimal use for energy production with livestock and farming practices. I am not familiar with the status of specific programs or research at NREL in this issue area, but if confirmed, I will request a briefing so I can evaluate current and future research opportunities and how best to work with you and the Committee on shared goals to maximizing productivity of American energy and agriculture.

**Questions for the Record from Senator Steve Daines**

**Question 1:** Mr. Griffith, if confirmed to this position, you will play a key role in advancing U.S. energy dominance to support growing power needs from AI, quantum, and advanced technology. Will you commit to working together with Dr. Gil to ensure we have the power and the resources to be world leaders in high-tech innovation and energy production?

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Response: If Dr. Gil and I are fortunate enough to be confirmed, I will absolutely commit to work with him and others at the Department to help ensure we have the power and resources available to be remain the world leader in high-tech innovation and energy production.

**Question 2:** Mr. Griffith, as you know, President Trump issued several executive orders supporting Montana coal. We need to expand electricity generation, not replace it. With the new executive orders issued by President Trump, will you commit to working with me and Montana producers to support our coal mines and our coal power plants like Colstrip?

Response: If confirmed, I commit to working with you and other stakeholders in Montana to fulfill the directives in President Trump’s executive orders to support the American coal industry which provides good paying jobs and reliable power for America.

**Question 3:** Mr. Griffith, hydropower delivers a reliable energy source for many Montanans and is the second largest share of electricity generation in the state. Countless hydropower projects face delays because of supply chain shortages. It is crucial to revive our hydropower projects that support American jobs, increase our domestic energy production and keep energy costs low for families. Will you commit to advancing the expansion of our hydropower fleet, including via next generation technology, such as hydrokinetic energy, to enhance baseload power and deliver affordable energy to Americans?

Response: As Secretary Wright has stated, to meet the ever-growing global energy needs of tomorrow, we need energy addition, not energy subtraction. We must increase all forms of affordable, reliable and secure energy sources and technologies. Hydropower is a critical part of our energy mix, providing low-cost power to millions of Americans every day, particularly in areas like Montana which is served by both the Western Area Power Administration and the Bonneville Power Administration. If confirmed, I look forward to working with you and other members of the Committee on these important issues.

**Question 4:** Mr. Griffith, as our energy demand continues to rise, expanding energy production is necessary. The only way to achieve this is and maintain grid stability is by increasing baseload power, which will require an expansion of our transmission system. Will you commit to working with Congress to strengthen partnerships with states, communities and energy companies to expand energy production and ensure a reliable, secure, and affordable supply of baseload power?

Response: Maintaining and increasing the resilience of our nation’s electrical grid is a top priority. We have an incredible amount of existing and future power demands placed upon our nation’s aging infrastructure. To meet energy demands, we must prioritize efforts to build out our energy infrastructure, including transmission delivery systems. If confirmed, I will work with Congress, states, and stakeholders to strengthen, modernize and increase the capacity of our nation’s energy production and power systems.

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**Questions for the Record from Senator Ron Wyden**

**Question 1:** The DOE is currently facing pressure to significantly cut its Office of Clean Energy Demonstration (OCED), a key office that bridges the gap between clean energy technology research, development, and deployment and covers a portfolio from nuclear energy and energy storage to innovative and energy efficient manufacturing. As the Undersecretary, how do you plan to protect and advance America’s leadership in clean energy?

Response: If I am confirmed, I will request a briefing on the Office of Clean Energy Demonstration (OCED) to learn about the status of the program. As the Department works to advance technologies, I believe we should balance those interests with energy demands, available resources and the need to provide affordable, reliable, and secure energy. Advancing American energy leadership means investing in next-generation technologies – from expanding nuclear energy to accelerating breakthroughs in energy storage and innovation. If confirmed, I will be an advocate for the Department’s role to advance building a resilient, secure and energy future that powers our economy and strengthens national security.

**Questions for the Record from Senator Maria Cantwell**

**Question 1: Bonneville Power Administration**

Mr. Griffith, the Bonneville Power Administration delivers cost-effective and reliable electricity to rural and urban communities throughout the West, at no cost to the federal budget. Past administrations have proposed selling Power Marketing Administration’s assets, including BPA’s transmission. They have also proposed an end to cost-based rates which could increase costs to ratepayers.

As a result of recent personnel actions driven by the so-called Department of Government Efficiency, BPA lost an estimated 356 employees or 11 percent of its workforce through a combination of deferred resignation and the firing of probationary workers. Some of these employees were able to return to work – but BPA was already facing workforce shortages. BPA’s headquarters was also included on a GSA list of facilities to be put up for sale. There are reports that DOE is considering reducing PMA workforces by as much as 10 percent, impacting over 500 essential positions.

- Given BPA’s unique grid safety and reliability role, which is funded by ratepayers and not taxpayers, do you commit to support exempting their workforce from the current hiring freeze and future reductions in force?
- Can you confirm for the record that, since BPA is funded by ratepayers and not the federal government, any budget or staff cuts will only hurt the region and not reduce the federal deficit?
- Do you commit to articulate BPA’s safety and reliability role when considering any RIF proposals?
- Do you commit to oppose any proposal to auction off PMA assets, including those owned by Bonneville?

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- Do you commit to protecting Bonneville Power Administration’s decision-making independence as a Power Marketing Administration?
- Do you commit to working with Congress and customers to ensure the PMAs, including BPA, can continue their statutory mission unencumbered from interference?
- Do you commit to oppose any proposal to eliminate BPA’s cost-based rates?

Response: I appreciate that Bonneville Power Authority’s (BPA) cost-based model allows it to offer affordable power and transmission services to its coverage area. I am not aware of any active proposals by the Department of Energy to sell or auction off BPA or other Power Marketing Authority (PMA) assets. In terms of the BPA workforce, I am unaware of any specific plan to cut or reduce the numbers of employees, but any effort would need to incorporate reliability and safety elements of the grid system. If confirmed, I am committed to being an advocate for the Department and working with you and the Committee on issues related to BPA and the PMAs.

**Question 2: Hydrogen Hubs**

Mr. Griffith, one of the most widely supported energy investments by Congress has been figuring out how we can accelerate the use of hydrogen.

DOE selected the Pacific Northwest Hydrogen Hub - which was a joint application from entities in Washington, Oregon, and Montana –to serve as a national model of how an integrated, emission free hydrogen network.

- Will you work with Congress to continue the strong bipartisan support for scaling up clean and affordable hydrogen, including championing DOE’s hydrogen hub program?

Response: Hydrogen is a promising fuel of the future and one of several important tools in our energy toolkit. As we work to deliver affordable, reliable and secure energy to power our economy and national security, we must prioritize a strategy that leverages all our energy sources and technologies including nuclear, fossil fuels, renewables, storage and hydrogen. Our focus should be on practical deployment, private-sector readiness, near-term deliverability and ensuring every energy source is contributing meaningfully to U.S. energy security and economic growth.

Recently, there have been concerning reports about so called “hit lists” for different DOE clean energy grants that have been awarded but not fully disbursed. One of the projects on that list is the Pacific Northwest Hydrogen Hub.

- Do you commit to honoring pre-existing grant agreements, when the project terms and technical milestones have been and continue to be met?
- Do you commit that any review of projects be based on merit and meeting the terms of the grant agreement, and in no way based on a political screen that rewards and punishes projects based on hub locations and their political representation?

Response: I am not aware of any details to cut funding for specific projects. If confirmed, I commit to reviewing the status of program funding and to following the law .

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DOE's input to Treasury and the White House will continue to play a major role in implementing the hydrogen 45V production tax credit.

- Do you support the hydrogen tax credit that the hubs have said is necessary for their success and for standing up the overall national hydrogen economy?

Response: As previously mentioned, I believe hydrogen is a promising fuel for the future and an important part of our energy toolkit. We must prioritize an energy strategy that drives investments forward and deliver affordable, reliable and secure energy sources to meet current and future energy demands.

**Question 3: Battery Supply Chains**

Mr. Griffith, we need to continue to onshore and diversify American energy and ensure we are not dependent on unstable or adversarial nations. The Washington state battery industry, including companies like Group14 and Sila, have worked with DOE and PNNL for the past decade to do just that, while also providing economic opportunities in our rural communities by building advanced silicon battery material factories in Central Washington. Unfortunately, the vast majority of lithium-ion batteries and energy storage technologies depend on graphite, and 95% of the world's battery-grade graphite is controlled by China. As China further restricts exports to the U.S., the urgency to strengthen domestic battery supply chains, including through these key Washington state factories, only grows.

- Given the rapidly increasing demand for energy storage solutions to support the grid, data centers, and other critical infrastructure, what steps would you take to continue fostering growth and resilience for U.S. battery supply chains, particularly for raw materials and silicon battery manufacturing, that can help end our dependence on Chinese graphite?

Response: Battery storage is critical to building a more resilient and responsive energy grid – especially as we integrate diverse energy sources. The Pacific Northwest National Laboratory is leading the cutting-edge work to advance grid-scale storage, improve battery chemistry, and extend the life and safety of energy storage systems. This research is helping unlock the next generation of energy reliability and flexibility, ensuring we can meet surging demand while maintaining affordability and security. If confirmed, I will be committed to strengthening U.S. energy supply chains and reducing dependence on foreign sources of resources needed to meet our energy demands.

Industries working on battery recycling are also vital to securing our supply chain, as well as being big job creators and more sustainable than primary extraction. DOE has been essential to battery recycling and creating more efficient and sustainable batteries.

- Do you support continuing investments and work at DOE on battery recycling and alternative battery chemistries?

Response: I support battery recycling, which is important for economic, environmental, and strategic reasons. I look forward to learning more about alternative battery chemistries and I commit to reviewing the status of DOE investments in this space if I am confirmed.

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The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act included funding for the Department of Energy to bolster domestic battery supply chains and manufacturing and recycling capacity. Since it was signed into law, many grants have been awarded for new domestic battery manufacturing facilities to shore up the supply chain. Many companies are in the midst of construction.

- Do you commit to honoring legal agreements for these grants and ensuring projects that have already broken ground will continue to be able to access their grants and receive reimbursements through completion of the projects?

Response: If confirmed, I commit to following the law and I will review the status of program funding for domestic battery supply chains, manufacturing, and recycling capacity.

**Question 4: Transmission**

Mr. Griffith, as you well know, FERC estimates that electricity demand will grow by 128 GW nationwide in the next five years, more than 15% from today's levels from a variety of sectors including manufacturing, data centers, and electrification. In Washington State we are expecting demand growth of 30% over the next decade.

Even if we built enough generation tomorrow to meet this new demand, we don't have sufficient transmission to transport moving the power. It currently takes at least 7-11 years to build new large transmission in the United States.

- How will DOE help address the urgent transmission bottlenecks today that are inhibiting economic growth and American leadership on AI?

Response: Meeting rising energy demand requires a comprehensive, pragmatic approach that modernizes our grid, expands generation capacity, and invests in resilience. I am aware the DOE is focused on accelerating permitting for critical infrastructure, supporting a diverse mix of energy sources – including nuclear, natural gas, renewables and advanced storage – and strengthening transmission networks to move power where it's needed most. I believe there is also an opportunity to leverage innovation from our national labs, empowering state and private-sector partners and aligning investments with reliability and affordability to ensure America's energy supply keeps pace with our economic growth and security needs.

Lack of electric transmission capacity is one of the biggest barriers to economic growth led by manufacturing and AI, and yet the United States is largely incapable of building new large scale transmission projects: only 55 miles of new high-voltage transmission were built in 2023. Permitting bureaucracy and red tape, myopic electricity system planning processes, and interstate disagreements on how to calculate who benefits from (and thus who pays for) a transmission line have ground new construction largely to a halt.

- How can DOE help address these market barriers to getting new steel in the ground to drive economic growth?

Response: Strengthening, modernizing and securing our electric grid is critical to meeting our nation's energy demands. I believe there needs to be a whole-of-government approach, and the

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DOE must partner with other executive branch departments and agencies as well as state authorities to streamline the permitting process, increase certainty, and speed the deployment and construction of grid improvements to drive economic growth.

**Question 5: Smart Grid Grants**

Mr. Griffith, this Committee authored provisions in the 2021 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to make the U.S. power grid more resilient, adaptive, and efficient. So far, DOE has invested more than \$14 billion of the dollars Congress provided to boost the U.S. power grid. Funding that has been matched many times over by the private sector in all 50 states.

Many states have received support through important programs like the Grid Resilience and Innovation Partnerships (or GRIP program) that I originally authored back in 2007. These investments will have tangible benefits and cost savings of nearly \$100 million for electric ratepayers in my State.

- Will you commit to seeing these important grid investments through to completion?
- Will you work to ensure that all remaining funding in these important grid-enhancing programs from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law are deployed by the Department of Energy?

Response: If confirmed, I will follow the law and I commit to review the status of program funding for grid enhancements.

**Question 6: Transmission Facilitation Program**

Mr. Griffith, Congress created the DOE's Transmission Facilitation Program (TFP) in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to help build out new interregional transmission lines across the country. The TFP is a revolving fund program to provide Federal support to overcome the financial hurdles in the development of large-scale new transmission lines and upgrading existing transmission, which ultimately results in no federal ownership or cost to the taxpayer.

- Do you think the bipartisan Transmission Facilitation Program has been a success?
- Will you commit to supporting it as a tool to facilitate investment in major new transmission lines all across the U.S. at no additional cost to taxpayers?

Response: If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about the Transmission Facilitation Program (TFP). My understanding is that TFP allows targeted federal support to catalyze private investment, the program helps build out high-capacity, long-distance lines that connect energy sources with high-demand areas, which is an important part of meeting demand growth. I support the approach to accelerate timelines and build out grid capacity where it is needed most in order to deliver affordable, reliable and secure power to consumers and drive our economy forward.

**Question 7: Advanced Nuclear & Fuel Supply**

Mr. Griffith, my home state of Washington is a key epicenter of advanced nuclear energy in the United States.

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TerraPower, based in Bellevue, WA, is leading the way with Natrium, an advanced reactor being built in Wyoming as part of a public-private partnership with the Department of Energy under the Advanced Reactor Demonstration Program, or ARDP. X-Energy, the other ARDP demonstration awardee, is also looking to build a future reactor in Washington.

- Do you agree that we should continue to fully fund ARDP and ensure that the U.S. leads the way on advanced nuclear reactor technology?

Response: I believe the Advanced Reactor Demonstration Program (ARDP) is essential to restoring American leadership in nuclear energy and delivering the next generation of safe, reliable nuclear energy. By supporting early-stage deployment through public-private partnerships, we can move these technologies from concept to reality. If confirmed, I commit to having a full review of the program and the status of funding opportunities.

High-assay, low-enriched uranium, or HALEU, is set to power the future fleet of advanced Generation 4 reactors. I understand the advanced nuclear energy community is anxiously waiting for the Department of Energy to advance its plan to establish a domestic uranium enrichment supply chain right here in the United States and move away from dependence on countries like Russia and China.

- Will you commit to continue to support DOE's HALEU availability program?

Response: I am aware that the DOE announced commitments to provide high-assay low-enriched uranium (HALEU) to five U.S. nuclear developers for near-term fuel needs. I commit to having a full review of the program and further evaluating HALEU needs, and to supporting efforts to strengthen America's nuclear fuel supply chain.

**Question 8: National Laboratories**

Our National laboratories bring tremendous capabilities and intellectual horsepower in key areas of energy and national security including grid reliability, energy storage and cybersecurity.

Grid reliability and resiliency continue to be a top issue.

- How do you plan to ensure the Department will engage regional stakeholders and national laboratories to improve the grid reliability, security and affordability of our country's energy system?

Response: I believe grid reliability, security, and affordability are key priorities. I commit to working with you, the Committee, regional stakeholders and DOE national labs to deliver on our energy system's needs.

As you may know, Pacific Northwest National Laboratory has the new Grid Storage Launchpad (GSL) facility in my State of Washington. GSL is a grid energy storage research and development facility that will help accelerate development of next-generation grid energy storage technologies.

- How will you utilize GSL to advance America's energy storage competitiveness to eliminate/reduce our reliance on foreign owned critical minerals and foreign supply chain risks?



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Response: I am aware that the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (PNNL) brings together researchers, industry partners and grid operators to test and validate new storage technologies in real-world conditions which helps deliver durable, cost-effective energy solutions. The U.S. must develop our own critical resources at home and reduce reliance on foreign sources. If confirmed, I look forward to being briefed on PNNL's Grid Storage Launchpad and opportunities to strengthen domestic supply chains.

**Question 9: Wind Power**

Mr. Griffith, all domestic energy sources, including wind, will be key to meeting upcoming rising energy demand needs.

- Will you support a timely conclusion of the review of Federal wind leasing and permitting directed by the Presidential Memo that halts all Federal permitting of wind energy, even on private land, until that review is finished?

Response: If confirmed, I commit to reviewing the status of these issues and following the law.

**Questions for the Record from Senator Catherine Cortez Masto**

**Question 1:** The Department of Energy (DOE) provides essential programs and research across all corners of the Silver State – including critical defense measures at the Nevada National Security Site (or NNSS), workforce and cybersecurity collaboration with utilities or Nevada colleges and Universities, and public-private partnerships to create new, innovative energy technologies.

If confirmed, would you commit to upholding efforts in research, development, and demonstration (RD&D) projects that support our national defense and strengthen our global competitiveness?

Response: The DOE plays a vital role in advancing research and development to strengthen our national defense and global competitiveness. The Nevada National Security Site is at the intersection of innovation and security, supporting critical missions like stockpile stewardship, nuclear nonproliferation and high-hazard experimentation. If confirmed, I commit to having a review of all related research and development programs to understand how best to support our defense and global competitiveness capabilities.

**Question 2:** If confirmed – how would you work to convene and coordinate with energy utilities on today's grid challenges, such as growing energy demand, cybersecurity, and supply chain or transmission needs?

Response: Addressing grid challenges like demand growth, cyber security threats, grid resilience and expansion requires close coordination between DOE and energy utilities. These partnerships are essential to building a grid that is secure, flexible and capable of meeting America's current

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and future energy needs. If confirmed, I look forward to working with you and the Committee on these important issues.

**Questions for the Record from Senator John W. Hickenlooper**

**Question 1:** The degree to which transmission is increasingly being recognized on a bipartisan basis as an indispensable part of our nation’s critical energy infrastructure is encouraging. Secretary Wright made strengthening the transmission system Action Item #8 on his first Secretarial Order. With that in mind, can you share your thoughts on the most important steps the Department can take to achieve the transmission build we’re going to need to meet the significant load growth in front of us?

Response: Meeting rising energy demand requires a comprehensive, pragmatic approach that modernizes our grid, expands generation capacity, and invests in resilience. I am aware the DOE is focused on accelerating permitting for critical infrastructure, supporting a diverse mix of energy sources – including nuclear, natural gas, renewables and advanced storage – and strengthening transmission networks to move power where it’s needed most. I believe there is also an opportunity to leverage innovation from our national labs, empowering state and private-sector partners and aligning investments with reliability and affordability to ensure America’s energy supply keeps pace with our economic growth and security needs. If confirmed, I am committed to evaluating all the Department’s tools and resources that can be leveraged to strengthen, modernize, and secure our transmission grid to meet the rising demand growth.

**Question 2:** Ensuring reliable and affordable power in an era of surging load growth is going to take a lot more energy generation - but it’s also going to take a lot more transmission to get that generation from where it’s produced to where it’s ultimately consumed. The Department of Energy has a lot of proven tools at its disposal to get needed new transmission built - from the Loan Program Office to the Transmission Facilitation Program to the grant funding at the Grid Deployment Office. As you think through the Department’s FY26 budget, future organizational structure, and staffing levels, can we expect your full support for these important policy tools to help ensure we’re able to get the transmission build we know we’re going to need?

Response: Building on my previous answer, I agree we need to actively work on how best to meet the needs of our grid. If confirmed, I commit to having a full review of the activity and tools in the Grid Deployment Office as well as the funding and resources across the Department’s program offices that are currently committed to improve the resilience and expansion of the grid.

**Question 3:** We are increasingly dependent on China for critical minerals essential to our economy, energy security, and national defense. I believe that addressing critical mineral supply chains is a bipartisan opportunity in this Congress.

Do you agree that China is engaging in market manipulation to maintain its dominance in critical minerals, and that substantial federal investment and support are essential to boost domestic critical materials processing?

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Response: I agree that China is engaging in market manipulation and that we should take every effort to secure and develop critical minerals to strengthen our domestic supply chains so we can unleash America's energy dominance. We should not rely on foreign state actors or adversaries for key resources that are required to drive and power our economic and national security.

**Question 4:** We both agree that innovation will lead us to a cleaner and more reliable energy future. DOE is making great strides in researching new mining, processing, and recycling technologies through its "Mine of the Future" initiative – partnering with best in class academic institutions like Colorado School of Mines. Will you work with me to make sure this program is maintained and ideally expanded?

Response: If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about the initiative and hearing your perspectives about research for new mining, processing and recycling opportunities, and working with you and the Committee on this important issue.