

**U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources**  
**September 4, 2025 Hearing: The Swett and LaCerte Nominations**  
**Questions for the Record for Mr. LaCerte**

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

**Question 1:** Grid Enhancing Technologies

Secretary of Energy Chris Wright has noted the importance of grid enhancing technologies, or GETs, for relieving grid congestion, specifically referencing dynamic line ratings. A 2024 study by RMI estimates that GETs could save PJM, the nation's largest regional transmission organization, approximately \$500 million.

FERC currently has an ongoing rulemaking proceeding addressing dynamic line ratings. If confirmed, how will you support this rulemaking that could result in hundreds of millions of dollars in savings, and improve congestion, for our nation's regional transmission planners?

**Answer:** As I stated at the hearing, it is important to maximize technology as it relates to the grid. Grid Enhancing Technologies, such as dynamic line ratings, can better use the existing transmission system to allow increased access to lower-cost electricity supplies. I commit to work with my colleagues on this rulemaking if I am confirmed.

**Question 2:** Permitting Reform

Last Congress, this Committee advanced S.4753 to the full Senate, a bipartisan permitting reform bill that, among other things, granted FERC backstop transmission siting authority. S.4753 also directed FERC to issue an interregional transmission planning rule. Do you believe that granting FERC this additional transmission siting authority could streamline the transmission challenges our country currently faces? How would FERC requiring more interregional transmission planning coordination help ensure grid reliability?

**Answer:** While I have not had the opportunity to examine this question in detail, I believe that granting FERC additional transmission siting authority, while giving due deference to the states, could help with our nation's transmission challenges. If confirmed, I commit to working with my colleagues on this issue.

**Question 3:** Order No. 1920

Order No. 1920 attempts to facilitate long-term regional electric transmission planning and cost allocation. In Order No. 1920, FERC noted that a robust, well-planned transmission system ensures an affordable, reliable supply of electricity. Given that the initial compliance deadlines are slated to begin later this year, what are your views on the current state of federal transmission policy? If confirmed, how would you work to implement the long-term regional electric transmission planning requirements while reviewing compliance filings?

**Answer:** It is my understanding that utilities must submit their compliance filings for Order No. 1920 starting later this year. I acknowledge that a robust transmission system is essential to ensuring reliable and affordable service to customers. Without prejudging any matter that may come before me, if confirmed, I will work with my colleagues to consider these filings.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted from Senator Murkowski**

**Question 1:** Alaska depends on hydropower as a backbone of affordable energy, yet the licensing and relicensing process often costs small utilities millions of dollars and takes years to complete.

- How would you work to scale FERC's requirements to the size and risk of projects, particularly for remote communities where the alternative is costly diesel?

**Answer:** I believe that government should do all it can to get out of the way of small business and, if I am honored to be confirmed, I would work to regulate hydropower projects appropriately.

**Question 2:** License amendments for upgrades with no additional environmental impact such as adding a turbine or replacing penstocks still face duplicative reviews and long delays.

- What reforms would you support to ensure routine maintenance and low-impact upgrades can move forward quickly?

**Answer:** I agree that necessary upgrades should be accomplished with minimum delay and, if I am honored to be confirmed, I would examine this issue closely.

**Question 3:** Alaska utilities have experienced severe consequences from permitting delays, including lost construction seasons, equipment damage, and worker fatalities.

- How will you ensure FERC coordinates more effectively with state and federal agencies to prevent these kinds of outcomes?

**Answer:** I am not familiar in detail with the nature of FERC's coordination with other agencies, but if I am honored to be confirmed, I will work to ensure that FERC's interaction with other agencies is as efficient and effective as possible.

**Question 4:** The Alaska Energy Authority has emphasized the urgency of projects like the Dixon Diversion amendment, which would displace 1.5 billion cubic feet of natural gas for Southcentral Alaska. At Bradley Lake, duplicative studies may add years of cost and delay.

- Would you support allowing recent studies to be reused across projects where conditions remain unchanged?

**Answer:** This seems like a reasonable approach, which I would support.

**Question 5:** Alaska is also exploring marine energy opportunities, such as the East Foreland Tidal Energy Project in Cook Inlet.

- How do you see FERC's role in fostering innovation in emerging technologies like marine energy, while maintaining appropriate safeguards?

**Answer:** I believe that government should support innovative technologies like those you describe.

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**Questions for the Record from Senator Wyden**

**Question 1:** FERC's credibility depends on its independence. FERC plays a critical, non-partisan role in regulating electric and gas markets across the country to ensure that Americans have access to secure, reliable, and affordable energy. A partisan, politicized FERC could disrupt markets and undermine the stability that American families and businesses rely on. If confirmed as a FERC Commissioner, do you commit to doing everything in your power to ensure that FERC remains independent of Administration influence and continues to operate on a nonpartisan basis?

**Answer:** If confirmed, I commit to follow the laws as written and as ruled upon by the Supreme Court and to always maintain an independent vote and voice as Commissioner.

**Question 2:** FERC's workforce is already stretched thin, and its work is paramount to keep our country's energy systems operating smoothly. Further staff reductions would jeopardize our country's access to secure, reliable, affordable energy. If confirmed as a FERC Commissioner, do you commit to protecting FERC staff from layoffs and/or restructurings?

**Answer:** FERC cannot be successful without the dedicated and experienced career staff which serve our nation. While periodic restructurings are a part of any organization, severe reductions in force would impair the mission of FERC. I would advocate against such actions as it may be harmful to the reliability and affordability of our energy systems.

**Question 3:** The surge in electricity demand from Artificial Intelligence threatens to overwhelm the grid. A 2024 Grid Strategies report projected a likely increase of 128 GW in just 5 years, much of it from data centers. Transmission expansion is one of the only cost-effective ways to meet this demand, but progress is slow. What specific actions would you take as FERC Commissioner to accelerate transmission buildout? What should FERC do to incentivize or require data centers to be flexible in their energy consumption to reduce costs for all consumers and protect grid reliability?

**Answer:** If confirmed, I look forward to discussing with my colleagues the Commission's role in accelerating transmission expansion. There are proceedings open before the Commission relating to transmission development, as well as large loads such as data centers. Without prejudging any of those issues or related issues that I may be called on to address if confirmed, I understand that transmission expansion is essential to achieving the nation's energy, manufacturing, and economic growth imperatives. I commit to carefully considering these matters if confirmed.

**Question 4:** Electricity prices jumped nearly 10% between January and May 2025, and are projected to keep increasing. Reconductoring existing transmission lines with advanced conductors is one of the fastest and cheapest ways to add capacity — it often costs less than half of new construction and avoids years of permitting battles. Given FERC's statutory mission to help ensure reliable, affordable electricity for consumers, will you support using FERC's

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authorities to encourage and enable reconductoring of existing transmission lines with advanced conductors to help keep electricity affordable for American families?

**Answer:** I believe it is important to maximize technology as it relates to the grid. As I noted, FERC has required that transmission providers in certain circumstances consider the use of advanced conductors in their transmission planning and their interconnection studies. If confirmed, I would support the continued encouragement of the use of grid-enhancing technologies.

**Questions for the Record from Senator Cantwell**

**Question 1: Enforcing Anti-Market Manipulation**

In the wake of the Enron scandal, Congress required greater transparency in electricity and natural gas markets and empowered FERC to go after bad actors who manipulated markets to exploit consumers.

Since 2005, FERC has built a permanent cadre of internal energy experts that continually monitor and investigate anomalous market trends and anticompetitive behavior. These policemen on the beat have uncovered numerous schemes. To date approving over 130 settlement agreements, assessing nearly \$900 million in civil penalties, and disgorging over \$662 million in illegal profits.

That's why it is imperative the Commission continues to focus on preventing market manipulation. Particularly now when markets are transitioning or under extreme stress, because that means there are more opportunities for fraudsters to rip off ratepayers.

- Do you believe market manipulation and other forms of fraud impact the competitiveness of energy markets and the ability to produce just and reasonable rates?
- If FERC determines that an energy market participant made financial gains based on fraud or manipulating markets, do you believe those gains should be promptly returned to injured parties or consumers?
- Like the CFTC and other independent agencies, do you believe FERC should have the authority to permanently ban entities that have been caught manipulating electricity or natural gas markets from trading in energy markets ever again?

**Answer:** As a general matter, yes. Market manipulation and fraud interfere with well-functioning competitive markets. I believe that the Commission should enforce its laws and regulations, including the Commission's authority to provide remedies under the law.

If Congress provides the Commission with additional tools to deter bad actors from manipulating the markets and stop previous offenders from causing repeated harm, I will faithfully implement that legislation.

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**Question 2: Boosting Transmission Capacity**

A lack of transmission capacity has caused lengthy interconnection queues, stalling billions in development of urgently needed new generation capacity. This has resulted in increased electricity costs for consumers and missed opportunities to increase investments in our growing communities.

We are experiencing this first-hand in the state of Washington and Pacific Northwest. Last Spring, the Northwest Power and Conservation Council released a 20-year forecast for power demand in the Pacific Northwest. It found that within the Northwest, electricity demand could double within twenty years. The 2025 forecast by the Pacific Northwest Utilities Conference suggests that by 2030, demand could outpace supply.

The Pacific Northwest has some of the cheapest and most reliable power in the country, but we now need a lot more of it. Which means we must invest in our grid, diversify our energy supply and deploy new generation and transmission.

I am hearing from local communities about significant delays in the interconnection queue and that overloaded powerlines are impacting their ability to attract economic opportunities.

In the Northwest, Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) owns 75% of the high voltage transmission. I have been able to get BPA additional borrowing authority to invest in transmission.

- How can FERC help BPA plan for needed transmission in the Pacific Northwest?
- What do you think FERC needs to do to encourage or require utilities and other companies to invest in and build out the grid?
- What new technologies and processes could FERC support to reduce delays in building transmission capacity?
- The Big Beautiful Bill is expected to eliminate billions in planned electricity capacity additions in my state, how do you think that will impact that Pacific Northwest economy?

**Answer:** I understand the Commission's authority with respect to federal power marketing administrations such as BPA is more limited than its authority with over public utilities. If confirmed, I will work with my colleagues to consider any proposals to engage in voluntary, collaborative transmission planning efforts so that BPA, other federal power marketing administrations, and their respective customers can realize the benefits of participating in these processes.

I agree that investment in the transmission grid has the potential to both improve reliability and provide lower electricity costs to consumers and, if confirmed I commit to work with my

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colleagues on issues related to technologies or processes that could result in increased transmission.

**Question 3: Maintaining FERC Independence**

The FERC we know today was created to keep politics out of regulating our nation's energy infrastructure. For close to 50 years, FERC's role as an independent agency has protected taxpayers by working to keep energy markets just and reasonable.

It has not always been perfect as we saw with the ENRON crisis, but the independence of FERC has helped protect the public interest over political gain.

Today, FERC's statutory independence is being threatened. In February, the President issued an Executive Order asserting more control over independent agencies across the federal government, including FERC, through Office of Management and Budget reviews of agency decisions.

This means OMB and the White House will be putting their political thumbs on the scale on decisions that impact our nation's energy security and prices. Also, OMB would have to review the approximately 1,500 decisions FERC makes per year, which could result in significant delays in projects to increase transmission and reduce prices.

For both reasons, this Executive Order is not in the best of interest of the public and will cost the American public more.

- If confirmed, do you commit to upholding the Department of Energy Organization Act of 1977, which established FERC and gave it independent regulatory authority?
- Do you believe the Office of Management and Budget and the White House should review or have influence over any FERC decisions?
- If the President asked you to resign, would you do so?

**Answer:** As these items are actively in litigation, I can only commit to following the laws as written by Congress and ruled upon by the Supreme Court.

**Question 4: Meeting Surging Electricity Demand**

It is troubling that this Administration is moving away from an all-of-the-above energy strategy that was proving to be so successful in diversifying our nation's energy mix. This strategy has made wind and solar the cheapest source of new generation and was bringing new power sources, like advanced nuclear and fusion, online.

- Why do you think that last year wind, solar, and other renewables represented 93 percent of the capacity added to the grid?

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- Do you agree with most analysts that renewables, even when paired with energy storage, are still often the cheapest energy resources to deploy?
- Do you think we'll be able to supply our forecasted demand without wind and solar, particularly with the price of gas turbines soaring?
- Given the extent of the demand growth we are anticipating across the country, do you believe new data centers will be able to go online without renewable generation being in the mix?

**Answer:** I understand that the financial viability and costliness of energy resources can be influenced by different factors. I will work to maintain a reliable and affordable supply of energy for the nation, including accounting for forecasted demand growth. I understand that the Federal Power Act leaves authority over generation to the states, and that states play a large role in determining the nation's resource mix. If I have the honor of being confirmed, I will work with my colleagues to ensure that FERC fulfills its statutory mandate to ensure that rates for jurisdictional service are just and reasonable and not unduly discriminatory or preferential and to be resource neutral.

**Question 5. Extreme Weather**

With climate change driving more frequent and severe weather events – like hurricanes, wildfires, ice storms, flooding, and heat waves— it is abundantly clear that we need to move quickly to improve reliability and resiliency of our electricity grid.

- Are you aware that over 80% of major outages over the past two decades were attributed to weather events. And that the number of extreme weather caused outages shot up by roughly 78% over the last decade?
- What can you do as a FERC Commissioner to help harden the nation's grid against extreme weather?

**Answer:** I am aware that extreme weather regularly causes power outages. If confirmed, I would build on Commission efforts to harden the transmission grid with respect to extreme weather events.

In addition, I understand that the Commission has approved several extreme cold weather Reliability Standards proposed by the North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC) that set requirements for transmission planning for extreme heat and cold events and requirements for winterization of generators. If confirmed, I would seek to continue the Commission efforts to monitor implementation and would consider further efforts to improve winter preparation and generator winterization.

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**Question 6. Hydropower Relicensing**

In Washington state hydro supplies two-thirds of all the electricity used in Washington state. That hydropower is clean, affordable, reliable, and has been the backbone of my state's economy for many decades. Not only that, hydro's ability to provide firm dispatchable power when it's needed most is the key to integrating more intermittent power sources like wind and solar.

As the Commissioners know, FERC leads the licensing and relicensing process for non-federal hydropower facilities.

- Do you agree with the four former Commissioners that the current hydropower licensing process needs reform?
- Are there specific changes to highlight that Congress should consider making to the hydroelectric licensing process?
- Do you think there anything we should pay particular attention to when ensuring that fish passage mitigation remains a core tenant in the licensing process?

**Answer:** It is my understanding that the Federal Power Act requires FERC, when licensing a hydropower project, to protect fish and wildlife and to adopt fishway prescriptions from the Departments of the Interior and Commerce. I believe that government regulation should be examined and improved as necessary, the hydropower licensing process included. At this time, I do not have any specific changes to suggest, but if I am honored to be confirmed, I would work with Congress and my colleagues to look into this issue.

**Questions for the Record from Senator Hirono**

**Question 1:** As part of my responsibility as a member of this committee to ensure the fitness of nominees, I ask each nominee to answer two questions:

- a. Since you became a legal adult, have you ever made unwanted requests for sexual favors, or committed any verbal or physical harassment or assault of a sexual nature?
- b. Have you ever faced discipline or entered into a settlement related to this kind of conduct?

**Answer:** No.

**Question 2:** Hawaii does not fall under FERC's jurisdiction over interstate energy transactions, but in 2012, the FERC and the Hawaii Public Utilities Commission signed an agreement to share information on energy issues and regulatory practices. At the time of the agreement, FERC recognized that Hawaii could provide special insight into integrating high levels of renewable energy, demand response, microgrids, and energy storage. FERC's knowledge and resources can be helpful to the state's transition to 100 percent renewable power by 2045. If you are confirmed, will you commit to continuing FERC's information sharing agreement with Hawaii?



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**Answer:** I understand that the Commission shares information with state entities, such as the Hawaii Public Utilities Commission, on items of interest. I believe that those information exchanges support efficient and effective execution of our respective responsibilities. I would support the continuation of these exchanges with state entities if I am confirmed.

**Question 3:** Earlier this year, Secretary of Energy Wright picked five people to write a report on greenhouse gas emissions who all had a record of rejecting the established scientific consensus that burning coal, oil, gas is heating the planet. The five climate skeptics produced a report in July that downplays the threat of climate change, a report which the EPA is now citing in its efforts to justify overturning the EPA's greenhouse gas endangerment finding.

Do you believe that FERC should base its decisions on science? If confirmed, will you ensure that FERC relies on unbiased scientific data to inform decisions? What will you do if the President or other federal agencies, such as the Department of Energy, present you with reports relying on biased, cherry-picked data?

**Answer:** I believe that FERC is an economic regulator, and Commissioners should apply the facts to the laws which have been duly passed by Congress in making their decisions.

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

**Question 1:** Energy prices are rising across the country, as they are projected to continue climbing in 2026. In fact, recent data from the Department of Energy shows that the nationwide average retail price for electricity is about 7 percent higher than this time last year.

Do you support an all-of-the-above solution to growing energy demand? Why or why not?

If confirmed, will you commit to upholding FERC's tech-agnostic and independent approach to electrons?

**Answer:** Yes. A diverse energy mix is an important part of reliability and resiliency based upon the mix of resources available to the states and regions.

**Question 2:** Recent reports have determined that extreme weather is increasingly becoming a major threat to U.S. grid reliability.

How can FERC better ensure that the U.S. grid is more resilient against the threats of extreme weather?

Are there opportunities for FERC to further coordinate with additional stakeholders or other federal entities to harden the grid?

**Answer:** I understand that NERC proposed, and the Commission approved, Reliability Standards that require generators to winterize and transmission planners to plan for extreme heat and cold events.

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If confirmed, I would seek to continue the Commission's work with NERC to monitor implementation and consider further efforts to improve winter preparation and generator winterization as ways to minimize the threat of extreme cold weather to grid reliability. Also, I would seek the chance to work with stakeholders, as well as with state regulators and other federal agencies, to identify opportunities to plan for extreme weather, coordinate emergency operations, and to build infrastructure to harden the grid.

**Question 3:** FERC is an extremely busy agency with statutory requirements to keep the country's energy systems operating smoothly. FERC already operates on very tight staff margins, and I am concerned that any further staff reductions – like those we have seen at other agencies – could jeopardize our country's access to secure, reliable energy.

If confirmed, will you commit to protecting FERC staff from major layoffs or restructurings?

**Answer:** Periodic restructurings should be a part of the growth and modernization cycle of any organization, but I am committed to protecting FERC and staff from major layoffs which may impair the mission of FERC and harm the reliability of our nation's energy systems.

**Question 4:** In an effort to root out any manipulative or anticompetitive behavior, FERC's Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 Budget Request continues to prioritize a strong and robust energy market surveillance program.

If confirmed, will you commit to working with this Committee to combat energy market manipulation? In your opinion, does FERC need additional enforcement tools or authorities to deter bad actors?

**Answer:** Yes. At this time, I do not have any specific recommendations for additional tools or authorities the Commission may need. However, if honored to be confirmed, I stand ready to assist Congress with development of legislation in this area.

**Question 5:** The U.S. power system is experiencing increased incidents of physical attacks and a surge in state-sponsored cyber attacks on critical infrastructure.

If confirmed, what are some of the cyber priorities you'd bring to FERC? Are there existing efforts that you support? Or ways FERC can further incorporate public-private partnerships to combat emerging threats?

**Answer:** I view protecting the grid from cyber and physical attacks as a top priority.

FERC's work with the North American Electric Reliability Corporation in developing and enforcing Critical Infrastructure Protection (CIP) Reliability Standards provides the foundation for work on this important issue. These mandatory standards are essential to establishing baseline protections for the security of the bulk power system. Moreover, the Commission must stay ahead of rapidly evolving threats.

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**Question 6:** As a FERC Commissioner, what steps would you take to advance public participation and outreach? Are there ways that FERC can be more accessible to the public?

**Answer:** I recognize the importance of public input in FERC's proceedings and with FERC's mission. If confirmed, I will work with my colleagues on these important matters.

**Questions for the Record from Senator Hickenlooper**

**Question 1:** FERC Order 1920-A was recently issued on a bipartisan basis to expand state regulator's role in and reaffirm the requirement for proactive interregional transmission planning to meet load growth. If confirmed, will you continue to support Order 1920 implementation and interregional transmission planning to make sure the grid can reliably serve increasing load?

**Answer:** Without prejudging any matter that might come before me, if confirmed, I would work closely with my colleagues on the reformed interregional transmission coordination processes.

**Question 2:** If confirmed as a FERC commissioner, do you intend to coordinate with members of the Trump Administration, outside of FERC, in connection with how you will exercise your judgment and your authority as a FERC commissioner? If so, how and with whom? If not, do you commit to *not* coordinate or discuss your decisions with Administration officials prior to voting at commission meetings?

**Answer:** If I have the honor of being confirmed, I will follow all legal requirements with respect to communications with people outside of FERC, including FERC's *ex parte* communications rules that are grounded in the Administrative Procedure Act. Subject to those requirements, while I have not identified any parties to seek coordination, FERC would be better served by a stronger intergovernmental relationship across many areas, to include the Executive Branch and the states. This is especially true in cyber and critical infrastructure protection.

**Question 3:** Wholesale electric market competition has been a cornerstone policy of the FERC since a unanimous FERC issued Order 888 in 1996. Competition has been a powerful force for good in the U.S. economy in general. Are you committed to protecting and further competition in the wholesale electric power sector? How will you support such competition?

**Answer:** The Commission's statutory mandate under the Federal Power Act is to ensure that rates for the interstate transmission and wholesale sales of electricity are just and reasonable and not unduly discriminatory or preferential. If confirmed, I commit to working with my colleagues to apply this fundamental responsibility, including with respect to competition in wholesale electricity markets.

**Question 4:** Do you think FERC has any role to play in requiring coal-fired power plants to continue to operate past planned retirement dates in the United States? If so, what is that role?

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**Answer:** It is my understanding that the Commission's authority over the operation of generating facilities is limited under the Federal Power Act. If confirmed, I commit to working with my colleagues within the authority Congress has granted to the Commission to ensure that there are sufficient resources to meet system needs.

**Question 5:** If confirmed, what would you want for your legacy and your signature achievements as a FERC commissioner to have been when you leave the Commission?

**Answer:** Meeting the growing energy demands of tomorrow is a generational challenge which needs to be tackled immediately. I look forward to meeting this challenge, along with my colleagues and stakeholder partners, if confirmed.