

Written Testimony of Laura V. Swett
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Chairman Lee, Ranking Member Heinrich, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. Families and businesses across the nation are confronting significant pressures from rising energy costs, and I am well aware that many Americans have growing concerns about reliability of the systems that power their daily lives. My testimony today is rooted in the core principles that anchor my approach as FERC's Chairman: affordability, efficiency, and legal durability.

For many households, higher utility bills are debilitating burdens with personal consequences. I understand this firsthand from living in a household whose monthly bills caused me deep anxiety as a child. The weight of that financial stress remains with me and informs my resolve to ensure that families across the country are not forced to shoulder unnecessary costs.

As electricity demand accelerates, the Commission is acting decisively to ensure that the nation's grid remains both reliable and affordable. For too long, the United States has deferred critical decisions essential to maintaining the grid. That era has ended and the responsibility to steer our country through the energy future is squarely upon me and my four colleagues sitting here today.

The Commission's actions under my leadership reflect an unwavering commitment to our statutory obligation to ensure just and reasonable rates. At no point in its history has FERC advanced a more comprehensive set of reforms designed to safeguard American consumers—nor been, I think, subject to leadership as consumed with honoring the law as I am. From aggressively modernizing natural gas permitting to instituting far-reaching transparency requirements in our recent show cause orders, this Commission is executing a disciplined strategy to reduce costs while reinforcing system reliability *and* encouraging infrastructure investment. It's a very tough needle to thread.

At our June meeting, we took unprecedented action to strengthen cost discipline and reliability. We issued show cause orders to six Regional Transmission Organizations and Independent System Operators, calling for the most detailed cost transparency measures the Commission has ever required. Those actions should equip our state counterparts, who are responsible for doling out household bills, with clearer tools to assess expenditures, defend ratepayers, and ensure that emerging load drivers such as data center interconnections do not impose unjustified costs on households or small businesses. Additionally, we've established transparent, protective rules for integrating new loads more efficiently without compromising reliability.

Still in the vein of affordability, one of the most effective ways to lower energy prices is to eliminate infrastructure constraints that artificially restrict supply. Recent extreme weather events demonstrated this clearly: regions lacking adequate natural gas pipeline capacity experienced prices many times higher than those with sufficient infrastructure. These disparities translate directly into consumer hardship. In response, the Commission is implementing targeted reforms to streamline permitting and accelerate critical project development.

Following the Supreme Court's unanimous *Seven County* decision and under my leadership, we are realigning our environmental review practices with the Commission's statutory role as an *economic* regulator—a fact that appears to have been lost on several of my predecessors. Since I joined the Commission late last year, FERC has proposed significantly expanding blanket authorizations for routine natural gas pipeline activities and initiated parallel streamlining efforts for LNG and hydropower facilities to ensure that maintenance, repairs, and upgrades can proceed without burdensome, case-specific reviews. These reforms, reinforced by targeted and deliberate recalibration of our NEPA processes and the adoption of new hydropower categorical exclusions, reduce administrative friction while preserving full statutory compliance.

Accelerating the safe development of interstate pipelines and energy facilities increases supply on the system, and increased supply translates directly into lower utility bills.

Some numbers for you. Since I became Chairman, the Commission has authorized:

- 13,424,330 Dth/d of pipeline capacity, including 6,661,940 Dth/d under Blanket Prior Notice provisions;
- 980,000 Dth/d of storage deliverability; and
- 690,000 Dth/d of LNG export capacity.

We are moving fast but maintaining regulatory excellence so that those investing in and building infrastructure are less vulnerable to judicial review and the associated gridlock and wasted resources.

Under my leadership, the Commission also imposed a historic civil penalty of \$722 million against a company that launched a brazen, money-for-nothing scheme that siphoned hundreds of millions of dollars directly from electric utility ratepayers.

Collectively, these measures reflect a disciplined commitment to protecting consumers, improving affordability, and strengthening reliability.

In closing, the work ahead demands clarity, urgency, and strong leadership. Our energy systems are changing faster than ever, and the choices we make now will determine whether the nation is prepared for the coming decades.

We have taken meaningful steps in the past 9 months, but we are nowhere near finished. The path forward requires sustained resolve, smarter tools, and a willingness to adapt as new technologies and pressures emerge. I and my family have made many sacrifices so that I could realize the honor bestowed upon me by the President to guide our country through this critical period and to success on the other side. I take that commitment with grave resolve. So long as I am in charge, I will push our nation toward an energy system that is affordable, resilient, and built for the future, with focus, determination, and an unwavering commitment to the people who depend on it every day.

Thank you.