

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 25, 2021

The Honorable Jennifer Granholm
Secretary
United States Department of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20585

Dear Secretary Granholm,

As you consider the organization of the Department of Energy (Department), we write to express our support for the Office of Cybersecurity, Energy Security, and Emergency Response (CESER), and for maintaining its current leadership structure.

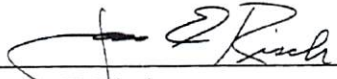
The reliability and resilience of the electric grid is critical to the economic and national security of the United States. Nearly every sector of our economy, including healthcare, defense, finance and manufacturing, relies on electric power to function. Top officials within the intelligence, defense, and power communities have warned that the United States remains vulnerable to cyberattacks that could result in catastrophic damage to public health and safety, economic security, and national security.

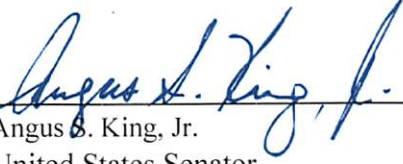
Recent news reports have illustrated that our adversaries are actively seeking to exploit holes in U.S. internet networks and control systems, which leaves our electric grid and other critical infrastructure vulnerable to foreign surveillance and potential disruption. In the 2019 World Wide Threat Assessment, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence stated that “[o]ur adversaries and strategic competitors will increasingly use cyber capabilities – including cyber espionage, attack, and influence – to seek political, economic and military advantage over the United States and its allies and partners.” Russia, in particular, has demonstrated its willingness and ability to disrupt electrical networks like it did in Ukraine in 2015 and 2016 leaving 230,000 residents in the dark.

As you know, CESER was created in 2018 to support the expanded national security responsibilities assigned to the Department, and led by an Assistant Secretary to appropriately focus on the importance of cybersecurity to its many missions. CESER plays a vital role in protecting the nation’s critical energy infrastructure from cyber threats, physical attacks, and other disruptive events. It helps maintain situational awareness, coordinates emergency support functions under the National Response Framework, and carries out its responsibilities as the Sector-Specific Agency for the energy sector by working in a collaborative and integrated manner with industry, as well as Federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial jurisdictions.

We urge you, as Secretary, to continue to prioritize cybersecurity by preserving the CESER office and upholding its leadership at the Assistant Secretary level. It is imperative that the Department does not march backwards on its responsibilities to the energy sector and the protection of our critical infrastructure given the persistent, growing, and significant threat cyberattacks pose to our nation's economy and national security.

Sincerely,


James E. Risch
United States Senator


Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator



John Barrasso
United States Senator



Maria Cantwell
United States Senator


Joe Manchin III
United States Senator


Mike Crapo
United States Senator


Bill Cassidy, M.D.
United States Senator


Ben Sasse
United States Senator


Lisa Murkowski
United States Senator

/s/ Martin Heinrich
Martin Heinrich
United States Senator

Susan M Collins

Susan Collins
United States Senator