

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4804
April 12, 2017

COMMITTEES
APPROPRIATIONS
ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES
INTELLIGENCE
VETERANS' AFFAIRS

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, Northwest
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump,

I write to encourage you to instruct the Department of Energy to immediately examine the potential for major reliability issues within our electricity supply and delivery system due to a series of factors that have put baseload nuclear and coal-fired power plants at risk, particularly in deregulated or competitive power markets.

As you and I have previously discussed, many baseload nuclear and coal-fired units are suffering from the cumulative effect of an onslaught of over-regulation, market rules that disadvantage baseload power, and multiple state and federal subsidies and mandates that disadvantage large baseload units and encourage negative bidding in competitive electricity markets. In combination with naturally occurring supply-and-demand forces of our energy markets, many baseload units that provide our grid with 24-7 reliable power are struggling to stay operational.

While PJM and other Regional Transmission Organizations (RTOs) have been diligent in their effort to ensure there is no short-term reliability gap, many of the baseload coal and nuclear units that ran “all-out” during the Polar Vortex emergency have retired or will be forced to retire in the coming years. In examining the growing dependency on natural gas within the nation’s electric portfolio by region, the North American Electric Reliability Council (NERC) noted in its 2016 Reliability Assessment that “a growing number of [its] assessment areas are trending towards an increasing dependency on [a] single fuel source...NERC has identified a dependency on a single fuel as a potential reliability risk requiring mitigation.”¹

While natural gas-fired generation is and should be valued for its ability to ramp up quickly and support intermittent energy sources, necessary improvements like cohesive gas-electric coordination and the ability to secure firm, uninterruptible supply remain issues. Combined with the fact that “coal generation retirements have and are continuing to outpace projections,” weather emergencies like the Polar Vortex will put demands on the grid that our nation’s future electric generation portfolio may not be able to meet.² Firm fuel supply is critical; nuclear and coal-fired power plants satisfy that requirement with ample fuel on-site or in their reactors.

It is critical that the Department of Energy promptly examine whether it is in the national interest to preserve diversity of generation in our electric sector in an effort to immediately secure the reliability of our nation’s grid.

I thank you for your consideration and am happy to make myself available to you at any time to discuss these matters.

¹ 2016 Long-Term Reliability Assessment. North American Electric Reliability Council. December 2016. Pg. 15.

² Id. at pg. 16.

Sincerely,



Joe Manchin III
United States Senator

Cc: The Honorable Rick Perry