June 22, 2026

The Honorable Orice Williams Brown
Acting Comptroller General of the United States
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Ms. Brown:

I am writing to request that the Government Accountability Office investigate the extent to which the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) has evaluated and responded to recent market pressures — for instance, updates to aging power grids and the expansion of AI data centers — in ways that promote affordable energy rates for U.S. consumers. This review will provide critical information to support my work to investigate the root causes of rising energy costs and provide relief for Americans.

A March 2026 report from the Joint Economic Committee – Minority found that the average U.S. electric bill increased by around $110, or 6.4 percent, last year, with households in nearly every state paying more for electricity in 2025 compared to 2024.[1] In addition, a previous Committee report warned that the cuts that President Trump and Congressional Republicans made to clean energy programs would raise energy costs for consumers, including by making it harder to afford energy-saving upgrades that can help a typical family save up to $1,080 per year.[2]

Updates to aging power grids may contribute to higher costs for consumers. According to an estimate from for the nonprofit organization PowerLines, investor-owned utilities have proposed to spend around $1.4 trillion through 2030 on energy infrastructure improvements, and

[1] Joint Economic Committee – Minority, *Update: State-by-State Data – Annual Electricity Bills Up $110 Per Family in 2025* (Mar. 17, 2026) (www.jec.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/democrats/2026/3/new-data-families-paid-even-more-for-electricity-under-trump-than-previously-projected).

[2] Joint Economic Committee – Minority, *Recent Clean Energy Programs Lower Costs for Families and Are Vital to U.S. Manufacturing, Jobs, and Energy Security* (May 15, 2025) (www.jec.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/democrats/2025/5/recent-clean-energy-programs-lower-costs-for-families-and-are-vital-to-u-s-manufacturing-jobs-and-energy-security).

"[m]uch of these…costs could eventually be passed on to consumers, as utilities file rate increase requests that could result in higher utility bills."[3] For example, utilities requested $31 billion in rate increases in 2025 — double the requests in 2024 — and requested $9.4 billion in increases in the first quarter of 2026 alone.[4]

In addition, more analysis is needed about the impact of AI data centers on electricity costs. A 2025 *Bloomberg* analysis found that electricity costs per month have risen by as much as 267 percent over five years in areas near significant data center activity.[5] A report from the energy company Bloom Energy has also estimated that energy demand from computing equipment inside U.S. data centers will roughly double between 2025 and 2028.[6] In addition, a Goldman Sachs analysis predicted that data centers could constitute 40 percent of electricity demand growth by the end of this decade.[7]

Through FERC, the federal government oversees the wholesale electricity markets that buy, sell, and trade electricity before it reaches retail customers.[8] While major sections of the United States operate under more traditional market structures, around two-thirds of the nation's electricity load is served in regions with Regional Transmission Organizations/Independent System Operators (RTOs/ISOs).[9] In these regions, which include New Hampshire, RTOs/ISOs

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[3] PowerLines, *Utility Spending is Rising: A Review of Utility Capital Expenditure Plans* (Apr. 2026) (powerlines.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/0413_PowerLines-CapEx-Report.pdf).

[4] *Id.*; PowerLines, *Utility Bills are Rising Q1 2026* (May 2026) (powerlines.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/05/0511_PowerLines_Rising-Utility-Bills-Q1-2026.pdf).

[5] *AI Data Centers are Sending Power Bills Soaring*, Bloomberg (Sept. 29, 2025) (www.bloomberg.com/graphics/2025-ai-data-centers-electricity-prices/).

[6] Bloom Energy, *2026 Data Center Power Report: When Power Defines Growth: How Power Availability is Reshaping the Data Center Industry* (Jan. 2026) (www.bloomenergy.com/wp-content/uploads/2026-power-report.pdf).

[7] CNBC, *Electricity Prices Rising by Double the Rate of Inflation. Data Center Demand Means No Relief Ahead, Analysts Say* (Feb. 12, 2026) (www.cnbc.com/2026/02/12/electricity-price-data-center-ai-inflation-goldman.html).

[8] Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, Energy Markets (www.ferc.gov/opp/energy-markets) (accessed May 21, 2026).

[9] *Id.* Six FERC-regulated RTOs/ISOs exist in the United States: PJM Interconnection, Midcontinent ISO, California ISO, Southwest Power Pool, New York ISO, and ISO-New England. Another regional grid operator, the Electric Reliability Council of Texas (ERCOT), has electricity markets that are not subject to FERC jurisdiction. Instead, ERCOT is subject to oversight by the state public utility commission. Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, An Introductory Guide to Electricity Markets Regulated by the Federal Energy Regulatory

manage transmission needs, plan for the long-term needs of the electric power system, and run the organized wholesale electricity markets.[10] FERC oversees RTO/ISO development and operation with the goal of achieving market prices that are just and reasonable and not unduly discriminatory or preferential.[11]

FERC has recognized that emergent, rapid growth in demand "presents new challenges to the electricity industry on resource adequacy, reliability, and rates."[12] In connection with the FERC State of the Markets report for 2024, then-Chairman Mark Christie stated that "rapidly increasing electricity demand, driven by hyperscale customers such as data centers…is not sustainable and must be addressed."[13] In September 2025, FERC also sent a letter to RTOs/ISOs noting that high-demand electricity consumers like data centers called for new and improved methods for forecasting demand.[14] In addition, FERC has taken steps to address growing demand, including by supporting the development of new energy resources, approving expanded competitive markets in some regions, and directing changes in operating arrangements at large energy users like data centers to reduce their strain on power grids.[15] In April 2026, FERC also announced that it would move forward on reforms "designed to ensure the timely, orderly, and equitable integration of significant electrical loads — such as the increasing demand from data centers — into the nation's transmission infrastructure."[16]

Commission (www.ferc.gov/introductory-guide-electricity-markets-regulated-federal-energy-regulatory-commission) (accessed June 11, 2026).

[10] Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, An Introductory Guide to Electricity Markets Regulated by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (www.ferc.gov/introductory-guide-electricity-markets-regulated-federal-energy-regulatory-commission) (accessed June 11, 2026).

[11] *See, e.g.*, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, *FACT SHEET: FERC Directs Nation's Largest Grid Operator to Create New Rules to Embrace Innovation and Protect Consumers* (Dec. 18, 2025) (www.ferc.gov/news-events/news/fact-sheet-ferc-directs-nations-largest-grid-operator-create-new-rules-embrace).

[12] Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, *2025 State of the Markets* (Mar. 19, 2026 (www.ferc.gov/news-events/news/report-3-state-markets-report-2025).

[13] Federal Energy Regulatory Commission: *FERC State of the Markets Report for 2024 Released* (Mar. 20, 2025) (www.ferc.gov/news-events/news/SMR-2024).

[14] Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, *Chairman Rosner's Letter to the RTOs/ISOs on Large Load Forecasting* (Sept. 18, 2025) (www.ferc.gov/news-events/news/chairman-rosners-letter-rtosisos-large-load-forecasting).

[15] *See* Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, *Energized for 2026* (Jan. 14, 2026) (www.ferc.gov/news-events/news/energized-2026).

[16] Federal Energy Regulatory Commission: *FERC to Act on Large Load Interconnection Docket by June 2026* (Apr. 16, 2026) (www.ferc.gov/news-events/news/ferc-act-large-load-

Despite these efforts, the potential impact of aging power grids and heightened demand requires a deeper review of whether FERC has taken sufficient action to promote just and reasonable rates. To inform my investigation of federal efforts in this area, I request that GAO address the following questions:

1. How does FERC promote rates that are just and reasonable, and how does FERC assess RTO/ISO performance regarding consumer benefits? How successful, or not, has FERC been in these efforts?

2. What steps has FERC taken to help organized wholesale markets address any challenges associated with anticipated surges in demand while still benefiting consumers, and have these steps been sufficient to promote just and reasonable rates?

    a. What additional actions are possible and necessary to promote just and reasonable rates?

3. What market rules or other changes have RTOs/ISOs proposed or adopted to address challenges associated with anticipated surges in demand?

4. How does FERC assess whether its efforts are meeting its goal of establishing and applying FERC rules and policies in a way that will result in just and reasonable rates?

Thank you for your consideration of this request. Please contact [redacted] with the Joint Economic Committee staff at [redacted] with any questions.

Sincerely,

Margaret Wood Hassan
Ranking Member

interconnection-docket-june-2026). In June 2026, FERC ordered each of the six regional grid operators under its jurisdiction to explain why current rules for handling large electricity users are adequate or propose new rules for addressing these users. FERC noted that these "actions are designed to ensure that consumers nationwide continue to enjoy reliable, affordable power, as demand soars and technology leaps forward." Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, *Fact Sheet: FERC Takes Action to Supercharge America's Grid for Efficiency, Reliability, and a Bold Energy Future* (June 18, 2026) (www.ferc.gov/news-events/news/fact-sheet-ferc-takes-action-supercharge-americas-grid-efficiency-reliability-and).

cc: David Schweikert
Chairman, Joint Economic Committee

Eric Schmitt
Vice Chairman, Joint Economic Committee