

Hearing

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DEFINING THE FUTURE

JOINT OUTREACH TEAM OF
WESTERN AREA POWER ADMINISTRATION
LISTENING SESSION

Whereupon, the hearing of the above-entitled cause was taken at the Holiday Inn Grand Montana, 5500 Midland Road, Billings, Montana, taken on Wednesday, the 18th day of July, 2012, beginning at the hour of 6:02 p.m.

Hearing

APPEARANCES

Ms. Lauren Azar
Senior Advisor to the Secretary
Department of Energy
Office of the Secretary
1000 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20585

and

Ms. Robin Johnson
Upper Great Plains Region
Western Area Power Administration
P.O. Box 35800
Billings, MT 59107

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1 MS. JOHNSON: Good evening. We're going
2 to go ahead and get started.

3 Okay. My name is Robin Johnson and I am
4 the Administrative Officer for the Upper Great Plains
5 Region of Western Area Power. And it's my privilege
6 to welcome you here this evening.

7 This is the second of a total of six
8 listening sessions. And Bob Harris, the Regional
9 Manager for the Upper Great Plains, unfortunately
10 couldn't be here tonight. He had a conflicting
11 meeting in South Dakota, but he certainly is very
12 interested in your input and wants to welcome you
13 here this evening and acknowledge the fact that you
14 have gone out of your way, as you had many other
15 things you could be doing, but you chose to
16 participate in this event.

17 Mr. Harris will definitely review the
18 transcript from this evening's session. Again your
19 ideas and thoughts are very important to him. So I'm
20 going to go ahead and turn this over to Lauren Azar,
21 who is the Senior Advisor to the Secretary of Energy,
22 Secretary Steven Chu.

23 And Lauren is going to provide some
24 introductory remarks as well as conduct this session.

25 MS. AZAR: Thank you. And I'm absolutely

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1 delighted to see how many folks have turned out
2 tonight. We need a lot of input in what Western and
3 the DOE are trying to do, and the initiative is
4 called the Defining the Future.

5 So with that, let me just -- I'm not quite
6 sure when we have audiences, I'm never sure if folks
7 are completely aware of exactly what the Power
8 Marketing Administrations do, and also what we're
9 trying to do through the Defining the Future
10 initiative, and the Joint Outreach Team, which is a
11 joint team of experts between Western and the DOE.

12 So let me just start off with, there's
13 been, as you can imagine, quite a lot of swirl around
14 this Defining the Future initiative.

15 And before we get into some details, let
16 me start by saying I hope that all of us in this room
17 have shared goals, and shared goals that we want to
18 live in a nation that is prosperous, that is
19 competitive in the global economy, that is safe and
20 has reliable electricity that is affordable, and that
21 we have a grid that is flexible and resilient.

22 And the question of course is then in the
23 details, right? If we can share -- if we do indeed
24 share those goals, how do we get there? Do we
25 already have it? We have parts of it.

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1 The industry, the electric industry is
2 changing around us and changing dramatically, so the
3 question is how should the electric industry change
4 to ensure that indeed we can reach those goals and
5 sustain those goals as we go forward for our children
6 and grandchildren.

7 And then the question of course is what's
8 the role of the Power Marketing Administrations and
9 specifically Western.

10 So with that in mind, keep that in the
11 back of your mind when you're thinking about this
12 initiative, and what we are trying to do and
13 Secretary Chu's memo that, if you haven't seen a copy
14 of it, there's a copy in the back.

15 The Federal Power Program has been in an
16 incredibly successful program for this nation over
17 the last 75 years, and is a significant component of
18 our nation's infrastructure.

19 Just a quick background of what the PMAs
20 are. Historically, they were created to sell
21 electricity from the dams, from the federal
22 hydroelectric dams. That was their core mission, and
23 it remains their core mission to this day. And it's
24 very important.

25 Over the years, however, new obligations

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1 have been placed on the Power Marketing
2 Administrations. Most of all, most of which belong
3 in the realm of the transmission grid and making sure
4 the transmission grid is reliable and how power is
5 sold over the transmission grid.

6 And also environmental controls, a lot of
7 them are in BPA's service territory, but I do know
8 Western has quite a lot as well.

9 So as the years have gone on, the core
10 mission of the PMAs has -- while it's maintained,
11 there are many layers on top of it at this point in
12 time.

13 The dams of course are owned not by
14 Western but by the Army Corps of Engineers of the
15 Bureau of Reclamation. In fact, they're not only
16 owned by them, but they're operated by them. And any
17 repairs that are done, including deciding when
18 they're going to do them and how they're going to do
19 them, of course is not decided by Western, but is
20 decided by other entities.

21 The PMAs of course sell the electricity
22 from these dams mostly to local public utilities,
23 cooperatives, as well as municipalities.

24 And the -- one of the things that Congress
25 has done over the years, some of the PMAs started off

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1 with building transmissions, but other over the years
2 have been required to build transmissions and
3 substations. And indeed they --n of course, the PMAs
4 don't deliver power to the homes, right? They
5 deliver it to another utility who then sells it to
6 the retail customer.

7 So Western's transmission infrastructure
8 is unbelievably significant vis-a-vis this nation.
9 They own 17,135 miles of transmission, and 321
10 substations.

11 Let me just give you a snapshot of some of
12 the, some of the challenges that we all have to
13 grapple with with regards to Western.

14 Let's talk about their wood poles. They
15 have, you know, a lot of wood poles that their
16 transmission lines are on. Right now 61 percent of
17 those wood poles are 50 years old or older.

18 That's beyond their life expectancy. 17
19 percent are between 40 and 50 years old and they're
20 going to soon exceed their useful life.

21 In other words, 78 percent of the wood
22 poles in Western are going to need replacing in the
23 near term.

24 Now I want to compliment Western because
25 they've done a heck of a good job with regards to

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1 maintaining those poles so they have been able to
2 exceed their life expectancy. But at some point in
3 time, no matter how much you prop them up, you're
4 going to need to replace them.

5 So what about Western's transformers? 24
6 percent of those transformers are over 40 years old,
7 which is exceeding their useful life. One is 77
8 years old, which again, unbelievable that Western has
9 been able to keep this puppy running for 77 years,
10 hats off to them.

11 But at some point in time you've got to
12 recognize that a 77-year-old transformer is going to
13 have to be replaced.

14 In addition to those 24 percent that are
15 already exceeding their useful life, 6 percent are
16 nearing their useful life. So we've got essentially
17 one-third of the transformers in Western's fleet are
18 going to need replacing in the near term.

19 Transformers are really expensive and
20 they're actually pretty difficult to get. There's a
21 long lead time in relation to placing the orders and
22 getting transformers.

23 So the bottom line is, we need to figure
24 out, as we're going forward, how best to ensure that
25 Western plays a leadership role in the nation to

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1 ensure that we can continue to have a safe and
2 reliable, and affordable electric service to
3 Western's customers, and a resilient and flexible
4 grid.

5 Western plays a very important role and I
6 don't need to tell the folks that are in this room
7 because you have come out, Western plays a very
8 important role to ensure that its customers have a
9 safe and reliable and affordable supply of
10 electricity.

11 In March, Secretary Chu sent the memo to
12 all four of the PMAs, and again the memo was prompted
13 by the changing factors in the electric industry.
14 And it's not unique to the PMAs. The PMAs are the
15 only entities of course over which Secretary Chu has
16 some authority. But it really was a call to the
17 entire electric industry. You've got a lot of things
18 changing in your industry and you all have to
19 respond.

20 And so he was saying to the PMAs, let's
21 step up to the plate, let's be leaders and let's
22 figure this out.

23 So the Secretary laid out a roadmap for how
24 the federal agencies can help lead the way to create
25 a 21st century grid necessary to support the economic 9

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1 growth and energy security in the United States.

2 To begin that process, Western and DOE has
3 convened a joint team of experts who will use the
4 input they are receiving from you tonight, as well as
5 the input they're receiving from others in five other
6 listening sessions, plus five workshops.

7 And we are also receiving comments on the
8 web. So if you, in addition to talking tonight or if
9 you don't want to talk tonight, you want to submit
10 written comments, you can send them to jot@wapa.gov.

11 So we look forward to getting your input
12 because it's important in figuring out how Western
13 can implement the Secretary's memo.

14 And of course each of the regions in
15 Western are different. So part of the challenge with
16 Western is to figure out, you know, how to establish
17 -- how to attain these shared goals, given the unique
18 nature of the statutory obligations in each of the
19 regions, as well as the unique nature of the customer
20 base. Because each customer base is different in the
21 different regions in Western.

22 Western and DOE also recognize the
23 importance of hearing from communities, and as we
24 move forward to help modernize and secure our
25 electric system, we want to hear from our communities₁₀

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1 and that's why we're hosting these meetings, public
2 meetings, over the next three weeks.

3 We're going to continue to work with
4 Congress throughout this process and talk about how
5 the PMAs can help with the other players in the
6 electric industry to transform our national electric
7 grid in a way that ensures consumers have access to
8 secure and affordable electricity.

9 So that's the end of my initial comments.
10 Let me just tell you how the listening session
11 tonight is going to proceed.

12 A number of folks pre-registered, thank
13 you very much. We're going to go through the
14 pre-registered folks first who indicated that they
15 wanted to speak. I will call out your name, and when
16 you get up here if you could for the court reporter,
17 please state your name and spell it. I'm sure she
18 would also appreciate if you would speak slowly and
19 clearly.

20 Every speaker is going to have three
21 minutes. We want to make sure everybody has got an
22 opportunity to speak. Once we get through those that
23 have pre-registered, said they wanted to speak, I
24 will then get the list from the back from the new
25 people who said they wanted to speak. We'll go

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1 through those. If we still have time, we'll open it
2 up for other folks if they, you know, became
3 energized by some of the other comments, they can
4 stand up and speak at that point in time.

5 The court reporter is here and she's going
6 to be recording all of your comments, of course, and
7 the Joint Outreach Team, which is the team of experts
8 that is working on this, is going to review -- they
9 will be reviewing all of the comments received, both
10 in the workshops, the listening sessions, as well as
11 on the web site.

12 So this is your opportunity to provide us
13 with input and we want to hear it.

14 Again, I applaud Billings and those around
15 Billings for a great showing tonight, and we look
16 forward to hearing from you.

17 And I look forward to working with you
18 folks, and I know that the experts on the JOT team do
19 as well, as we figure out how best to ensure that we
20 have the infrastructure for our nation to achieve the
21 goals I articulated earlier.

22 So with that, I'm going to start off, if
23 it's okay, I'm a former Public Service Commissioner
24 from Wisconsin. In fact that was my last position
25 before I went to work for Secretary Chu. So I'm

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1 going to call on my former colleague, if that's okay,
2 to start this off, Commissioner Travis Kavulla, to
3 start off. And thank you.

4 MR. KAVULLA: Thank you, Lauren and
5 everyone for being here. It's good to see so many
6 familiar faces in the audience today.

7 I'm Travis Kavulla. The last name is
8 spelled K-a-v-u-l-l-a.

9 I'm the Commissioner for District 1, which
10 includes 19 counties in central, northern, and
11 eastern Montana, as well as Chairman of the
12 Commission.

13 I represent a lot of Co-op country in the
14 State of Montana. I think a good two/fifths or some
15 of the electorate in my area is made up of Co-op
16 member owners, so I'm particularly sensitive to
17 concerns, even though the PSC in Montana does not
18 regulate you in the least.

19 Most of my comments are related to the
20 memorandum with which you are probably all familiar
21 with written by Secretary of Energy Steven Chu and
22 released on March 16, 2012.

23 I do think the memorandum makes a correct
24 observation that "the PMAs' equipment is integrally
25 intertwined with the underlying system."

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1 PMAs don't exist in a vacuum. They are
2 interrelated and with the ability to offer a full
3 bouquet of transmission and ancillary services is
4 essential for both transmission operators that are
5 investor owned, like Northwestern Energy, as well as
6 public owned, like WAPA.

7 Resources that require certain cost
8 effective transmission services in the territory of a
9 publicly-owned transmission operator may have to sink
10 in the load serving area of an investor-owned
11 utility, so things that investor-owned utilities that
12 operate a transmission grid do or don't do will
13 naturally impact the operation of PMAs and vice
14 versa.

15 I appreciate the Secretary's recognition
16 of the Energy Imbalance Market working group convened
17 by Public Service Commissioners representing states
18 in the Western interconnection.

19 I'm a member of that group. There are
20 dozens of balancing authority areas in the Western
21 interconnection.

22 And there clearly are efficiencies. If
23 all of the things being equal and working in the
24 realm of theory, there are clearly efficiencies to be
25 had by establishing some kind of a platform whereby

14

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1 lateral transactions can be more easily made and
2 offered on intervals that are of a shorter duration
3 than the current system of hourly scheduling. And
4 I think ultimately if you were to pool together all
5 of the resources of those balancing authorities, you
6 would ultimately need less generation, less
7 regulation service, a lot less duplication than what
8 you currently see in order to balance the grid and
9 dispatch energy efficiently.

10 But I do want to say as well that there's
11 nothing pre-ordained without the work of the PUC EIM
12 working group. There are really serious questions
13 about the costs associated with implementing any kind
14 of market assigned to support any kind of enhanced
15 bilateral trading.

16 And although the PUC EIM group has
17 commissioned to study that together with a market
18 assigned cost study from experienced operators seems
19 to suggest that the benefits outweigh the costs,
20 there have been a lot of criticisms of those studies.

21 And I think some of those criticisms have
22 a lot of validity. And I think stakeholders are now
23 trying to wade through the details and are cautiously
24 trying to ascertain the truth based on the evidence
25 that is before us.

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1 One of the great flaws of the PSC EIM
2 group is that it's a PSC EIM group. It does not have
3 the cooperation of the Co-op community, which needs
4 to be involved in these discussions.

5 There's another good route that is
6 occurring now which does have a lot of Co-op
7 involvement and public involvement. Those are the
8 discussions of the Northwest Power Pool, which has
9 convened a Market Committee and a Governance
10 Committee to examine initiatives that could bring
11 efficiencies to the grid.

12 There are few current initiatives of
13 something called the Joint Initiatives of the
14 Regional Transmission Planning Bodies. Those have
15 enjoyed some mixed successes. I think a reevaluation
16 of those efforts is overdue. And one of the leaders
17 of that process is the Bonneville Power
18 Administration.

19 And I am happy to say as well that the
20 Upper Great Plains operations of WAPA are
21 participating in that as well.

22 They're considering a lot of things,
23 everything from a regional EIM, which is kind of the
24 far end of the spectrum, but also a lot of more
25 common sense things, such as web exchange, which used

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1 to be called the Intra-hour Transaction Accelerator
2 Platform or I-TAP.

3 I-TAP allows intra-hourly scheduling for
4 more efficient market transactions. There's been a
5 lot of thin trading on that system recently because
6 it suffered from some design flaws.

7 But there's a lot of examinations of that,
8 of dynamic scheduling, of diversity interchange
9 capabilities for regulation service and energy from
10 variable energy resources, as well as intra-hourly
11 scheduling.

12 Those are all on the table. They're all
13 part of the work of the Market Committee, and they
14 would, if implemented correctly, I think potentially
15 save people a lot of money, people who are both
16 customers, investor-owned utilities who I represent,
17 as well as people like yourselves, Co-op member
18 owners.

19 These regional initiatives do need to be
20 studied not just on a broad basis, but also on a
21 Montana specific basis as well.

22 Montana is unique in the Western
23 interconnection. We do have a kind of an iron
24 curtain of transmission congestion, that's no secret
25 to anyone here.

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1 You have to wonder if some of these market
2 devices, if adopted, be stillborn because efficient
3 dispatch of them would be prevented by this
4 transmission congestion.

5 And similarly, there are all sorts of
6 questions of how transmission rates will work out,
7 will pancaking affect the practicality of
8 implementation of some of these initiatives.

9 And the Secretary's memorandum promises
10 future memorandum on this subject, which I know we
11 would all be interested in reading.

12 So I hope that WAPA's Upper Great Plains
13 Region can work together with Northwestern Energy's
14 Corporation, which is Montana's largest
15 investor-owned corporation, investor-owned utility,
16 as well as BPA's Western Montana operations to
17 understand some of the local peculiarities that color
18 this specific issue.

19 So I thank WAPA very much for visiting
20 Montana. It's a pleasure to have you in Billings. I
21 wish all of you very well in your work. I will be
22 submitting written comments as well at some point
23 after this meeting.

24 And I will be sure to send it to Mecca and
25 the Co-op organization so you can all get a copy as

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1 well.

2 I look forward to visiting with some of
3 you afterwards and catching up with some stories. I
4 hope your farms and ranches are all doing well.

5 Thank you.

6 MS. AZAR: Let's go to Brandon Wittman.

7 MR. WITTMAN: I'm glad she decided to
8 start at the bottom. It's kind of nice.

9 Last name is W-i-t-t-m-a-n.

10 I'm Brandon Wittman, I'm the General
11 Manager of Yellowstone Valley Electric Co-op.

12 Our Co-op consists of 18,000 meters, 2,500
13 miles of line in six counties, including the county
14 that we're all in right now, which is Yellowstone
15 County. So welcome to our territory.

16 At the eastern most point of Yellowstone
17 Valley's system is a large substation owned and
18 operated by WAPA. This substation is situated just
19 outside the town of Custer, Montana, and provides a
20 very critical delivery point that is integral to the
21 overall operation of Yellowstone Valley's plant.

22 Through this delivery point, Yellowstone
23 Valley purchased 49,759,000 kilowatt hours of
24 electricity in 2011.

25 This electricity is dependable, renewable,¹⁹

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1 carbon-free, cost-based energy. The WAPA power is
2 essential for all members of Yellowstone Valley,
3 especially the agricultural producers we serve.

4 The geography of our service territory is
5 such that the majority of irrigators and ag producers
6 reside between the towns of Custer and Huntley, which
7 is where our headquarters is located.

8 In the area between Custer and Huntley,
9 Yellowstone Valley has four substations serving
10 approximately 4,500 meters.

11 The overwhelming majority of these meters
12 are redirectly or indirectly related to farm and
13 ranch operation with over 200 meters serving
14 irrigation pumps and pivots. Many of these family
15 farms and ranches would not exist but for the
16 reliable affordable WAPA power that they utilize.

17 Yellowstone Valley's WAPA delivery at
18 Custer is the most dependable power source on our
19 entire system.

20 The WAPA crews are incredibly responsive
21 to any issues that occur, the power is reliable and
22 the rates are some of the most stable on the market.

23 The process put in place between WAPA and
24 not-for-profit utilities works and has worked for
25 decades.

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1 Anything that works this well would be
2 fairly easy to take for granted, however Co-ops in
3 Montana know how valuable this WAPA resource is and
4 we treat it accordingly. We have and continue to
5 engage our members in conservation and efficiency
6 programs in order to better utilize the WAPA
7 resource.

8 At Yellowstone Valley's Cooperative, our
9 membership collectively has over 500 geothermal heat
10 pumps installed to heat and cool their homes.

11 This is the most efficient heating and
12 cooling system available. It helps lower demand on
13 our system and improves the load factor for homes and
14 businesses alike.

15 In two cases we have provided rebates and
16 technical assistance for area schools, the result was
17 having geothermal systems at both Shepherd Elementary
18 School and the brand new Huntley Project High School.
19 We have facilitated these installations with a very
20 aggressive rebate program.

21 Additionally we have continuing rebate
22 programs for air-to-air heat pumps, energy efficient
23 water heaters, and Energy Star rated appliances. We
24 provide energy audits for our members upon request,
25 and have several net-metered renewable generation

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1 projects at various locations on our system.

2 PMA's have developed a process of providing
3 energy, recreation, and other resources that works
4 amazingly well. Simply put, PMA's pay their own way
5 and provide benefits to millions.

6 The directives outline in Secretary Chu's
7 memo threaten the principles and agreements under
8 which the relationship between PMA's and Co-ops, such
9 as Yellowstone Valley Electric, were formed.

10 The lifeblood of millions of Americans is
11 at stake. Please don't undermine a successful
12 program.

13 Thank you.

14 MS. AZAR: Thank you. Julia Haggarty.
15 She's not here. Jeff Fox.

16 MR. FOX: My name is Jeff Fox, and I
17 represent Renewable Northwest Project, a nonprofit
18 advocacy organization dedicated to promoting the
19 implementation of environmentally responsible
20 renewable energy resources.

21 Representatives of Western Area Power
22 Administration and the Department of Energy, I want
23 to thank you for the opportunity to comment today on
24 how WAPA and other Power Marketing Administrations
25 can continue and expand their role of delivering low

22

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1 cost, clean energy to millions of Americans.

2 It is estimated that the West's
3 electricity sector will require \$200 billion of
4 investment over the next 20 years.

5 Aging generation facilities must be
6 repaired or retired and the energy replaced, new
7 transmissions will be built to serve growing
8 population centers, and electricity demand will
9 eventually rebound and perhaps even rise dramatically
10 as additional power hungry products continue to enter
11 our homes and even our parking spaces.

12 Given this necessary overhaul of the
13 West's electric infrastructure, the Department of
14 Energy's focus on how federal agencies can help
15 achieve the most reliable, resilient, efficient,
16 clean, low-risk and low-cost electric grid possible
17 is not only entirely appropriate, but absolutely
18 central to the DOE's mission of ensuring "America's
19 security and prosperity by addressing its energy,
20 environmental and nuclear challenges through
21 transformative science and technology solutions."

22 In recent decades, perhaps nowhere has the
23 electric sector seen a more transformative technology
24 entrance than in the emergence of cost competitive
25 renewable energy. The rise of renewable energy holds₂₃

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1 great promise to play a significant role in
2 delivering on all of the laudable goals DOE has
3 articulated for 21st Century grid.

4 While the electricity industry is
5 evolving, the outdated policies and operational
6 protocols that govern much of the transmission system
7 today are hindering the natural market evolution to a
8 cleaner, more reliable, and more affordable energy
9 future.

10 These policies and protocols are
11 increasing the cost of integrating Variable Energy
12 Resources, and are also increasing the cost of
13 operating conventional resources to balance the
14 natural fluctuations of load. All of these
15 inefficiencies increase costs for rate payers.

16 Specific policy and protocol changes
17 Renewable Northwest Project supports include, and
18 it's quite a list:

19 More incremental scheduling practices for
20 power;

21 Centralized dispatch to manage the
22 balancing reserves required for loads and Variable
23 Energy Resources;

24 Participating in the Area Control Error
25 diversity program;

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1 Increasing dynamic scheduling capability;
2 Increasing real time visibility of
3 transmission utilization;

4 Increasing demand side flexibility;
5 Preparing for increased electric vehicle
6 utilization;

7 Constructing substation upgrades and
8 reconsidering transmission lines to increase the
9 transmission capability to renewable energy zones
10 with less cost and less impact on the environment;

11 Increasing the availability of Conditional
12 Firm transmission service;

13 Eliminating pancake transmission rates
14 that make transmission service uneconomic;

15 And facilitating regional transmission
16 planning.

17 Many of these transmission practice are
18 already commonplace in other parts of the country and
19 world.

20 WAPA and Power Marketing Administrations'
21 own history in marketing the power from the federally
22 owned hydroelectric dams provide a clear example for
23 how federal leadership can help to achieve a lasting
24 legacy of clean, reliable, affordable energy to power
25 the American economy.

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1 Renewable Northwest Project supports DOE's
2 leadership to ensure that we modernize the grid to
3 achieve a cleaner energy future, increase the
4 reliable operation of the grid, and access
5 efficiencies that can lower cost to consumers.

6 Working with the PMAs and regional
7 stakeholders will be critical to a successful
8 process. We look forward to working with the PMAs
9 within their respective regions to develop the
10 appropriate polices and approaches to achieve the
11 goals identified by DOE.

12 And thank you again for the opportunity to
13 comment.

14 MS. AZAR: Thank you. Alan Ruby.

15 By the way, if you have written comments,
16 I'm sure the court reporter would love just to have a
17 copy of your comments.

18 MR. RUBY: Alan Ruby, the last name is
19 R-u-b-y.

20 Thank you for this opportunity.

21 I would like to take issue with Secretary
22 Chu's March 16th letter, which I'll refer to as a
23 heavy-handed directive from Washington, D.C.

24 I drove 400 miles to be allowed three
25 minutes to address this listening session. That's

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1 less than one minute per 100 miles. And I sincerely
2 hope that this is not just a perfunctory process, and
3 there will be more hearing than listening.

4 I'm afraid Secretary Chu doesn't
5 understand the Power Marketing Agencies'
6 relationships with local Co-ops.

7 Secretary Chu is correct about one thing,
8 though, that PMAs were established by different
9 statutes at different times with different
10 intentions. And there are good reasons for that.

11 I know that as President of Montana
12 Electric Co-op Association serving 400,000 Montanans,
13 I spoke for all 25 Rural Electric Co-ops both east
14 and west for the Continental Divide.

15 My home Co-op, Flathead Electric in
16 Kalispell is part of the Bonneville Power Association
17 and is 100 percent renewable hydropower, nuclear and
18 local landfill gas.

19 But the point is that each PMA works
20 within their region in a collaborative process to
21 serve their members. This works much better than a
22 heavy-handed central directive from a disconnected
23 Washington, D.C.

24 These generating facilities may be
25 federally owned, but we, the local Co-op members,

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1 paid every dime of those costs with interest through
2 our electric rates.

3 We carefully managed and controlled those
4 costs over these many years to provide affordable
5 rates to our rural neighbors, and we don't intend to
6 lose control and let our members down.

7 Thank you for this opportunity.

8 MS. AZAR: Thank you. Melanie Roe.

9 MS. ROE: It' R-o-e.

10 Good evening. Gentlemen, women of the
11 Department of Energy, thank you for allowing me the
12 opportunity to have input into this process. I hope
13 with all my heart that you will listen to all the
14 people speaking tonight and hear their messages.
15 It's with great concern that we, as the original
16 stakeholders, approach this process which appears to
17 have a pre-determined outcome.

18 As you are aware, WAPA covers a huge
19 geographical area of primarily rural customers. As a
20 Trustee of Park Electric Cooperative in south central
21 Montana, we serve roughly 3,000 customers with a
22 reliable supply of low cost power. Our service area
23 encompasses four counties and covers approximately
24 5,500 square miles, over twice the size of the state
25 of Delaware, serving 2.5 customers per mile of line. 28

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1 It is my responsibility as an elected Trustee of the
2 Co-op to make sure my neighbors and friends have
3 affordable power. It will be very difficult for me
4 to explain to my elderly farmers and family ranchers
5 why their power may double or triple in price so a
6 wind farm developed by a for-profit corporation out
7 of Maryland can send its power over the grid we have
8 been caring for and improving over the past 75 years.

9 The PMAs were developed to serve their
10 local area with local control. Improvements are
11 ongoing. And while the DOE has indicated it feels
12 the TIF money has been underutilized, maybe it's
13 because the projects coming before WAPA have been too
14 risky.

15 Cost-based rates are exactly that, based
16 on cost. These costs include the cost of power and
17 the cost of transmission, which is already
18 disproportionately high. Within our low density
19 area, there's no room to absorb costs associated with
20 expansions to benefit urban areas outside of the WAPA
21 footprint. This becomes an issue of fairness.

22 As costs increase, we lose our competitive
23 edge. Park Electric is fortunate to have a diverse
24 customer base. We provide power to SMC, a
25 platinum/palladium mine, Printing For Less, an

Hearing

1 international printing company, several resorts, such
2 as Chico Hot Springs, as well as thousands of acres
3 of fertile ground under irrigation.

4 Each of these users of power are
5 interconnected and cost increases will affect the
6 profitability of each and every one. I just can't
7 see where changing around how the costs are spread
8 will give us any type of competitive edge. In fact,
9 it is more likely that the opposite will happen as
10 our businesses simply close their doors and our
11 ranchers sell off their property.

12 To address the desire of the DOE to see
13 more integration of alternative renewables as well as
14 demand side incentive, I would ask that you look no
15 farther than most of the local co-ops.

16 At Park Electric, we've already integrated
17 wind, small hydro and solar into our system, because
18 that's what our customers want. We encourage
19 conservation through education, including things such
20 as energy audits, rebates on high efficiency hot
21 water heaters and ground source heat pumps. We offer
22 green tags to our customers who desire them.

23 At the Co-op level, we are exploring new
24 concepts in metering and demand side monitoring, but
25 it's very, very expensive and we're trying to

Hearing

1 determine the best way to include it and still be
2 fiscally responsible and keep our co-op and our
3 customers whole.

4 And finally, I want to comment on this
5 process of the workshops and the listening sessions.
6 The timeframe since the memo came out through the
7 establishment of the dates for the workshops and
8 listening sessions is pretty compressed. It's
9 unfortunate that we here in Montana are expected to
10 travel hundreds of miles to participate in a workshop
11 -- my husband and I have a small business with 14
12 employees -- I think it's unconscionable that you
13 expect me to take three days off to drive to a
14 distant site to try and figure out what's going on,
15 why are we making these changes.

16 Our farmers and ranchers are harvesting
17 and haying, resorts are busy. The people who have
18 the most to lose are the least likely to have their
19 voices heard as this process is rushed through to
20 meet some arbitrary deadline.

21 Quite frankly I resent that, and it makes
22 me really suspicious of what is going on, and whether
23 or not anybody really cares about the consumers at
24 the end of the line.

25 You know, WAPA isn't broken, but maybe the₃₁

Hearing

1 DOE is. Thank you.

2 MS. AZAR: Thank you. Ray Clouse.

3 MR. CLOUSE: My name is Ray Clouse, last
4 name is spelled C-l-o-u-s-e. First name is Ray.

5 Good evening, Ladies and Gentlemen,
6 special guests, and all of those of you that are part
7 of this special listening session.

8 My name is Ray Clouse, and I won't tell
9 you that I'm 77 years old, but living out my golden
10 years with the help of Social Security and my
11 electric chair.

12 My family and I moved to our local
13 community in 1946. This was before there was any
14 electricity available or even the dream that
15 electricity would be a reality for rural America.

16 Since then, and until now, I have seen
17 many changes to the world, our community and yes to
18 myself.

19 One of my frustrations is how the people
20 of small communities in rural America are so often
21 overlooked and taken advantage of. Example, I will
22 have spent over nine hours on the road to be able to
23 speak to you for three minutes. So my hope is that
24 you will listen carefully to what I have to say.

25 I'm very fortunate to be elected as one of ₃₂

Hearing

1 five Trustees to my local Co-op. It is our job as
2 Trustees to plan for the future, set policies for our
3 co-op, and keep our system strong and constructed to
4 all known safety standards.

5 And I would like to emphasize that our
6 small system has the best safety record of any Co-op
7 in the United States.

8 I believe we're the smallest Co-op in the
9 country. Approximately 40 percent of our purchased
10 power comes from WAPA through our local G&T. We have
11 .59 members per mile, .59.

12 We serve farms, ranches, stock wells, and
13 a few oil wells, and seasonal type meters.

14 We also serve Home on the Range for boys
15 and girls needing a new environment. Goldenwest
16 worked with them to install a large ground source
17 heat pump to accommodate all of their needs. This
18 along with one small village with 65 meters.

19 Of these 65 meters, 25 percent are single
20 households, older "retired persons", who are
21 predominantly on fixed incomes. An increase to these
22 people is a major life changer.

23 The wholesale rates we are charged is
24 based on the cost causer being the cost payer. But
25 the numbers that go into the rates are very

Hearing

1 important. Environmental issues and other wild ideas
2 that are dreamt up by people who don't have to pay
3 for the product drive us wild.

4 I guess the term would be artificial
5 adders. How do we ever feel comfortable knowing what
6 these numbers are?

7 Our present day farmers and ranchers have
8 the title of being the best environmentalists in the
9 world. I, for all of my years of life, have
10 continually been concerned about the future
11 generations and having the belief that what we do
12 here now is very important in the large picture for
13 our local areas and the country as a whole.

14 The reason we're here tonight is to speak
15 for those who couldn't make this trip. Of course
16 this carries a major obligation, that is, to be able
17 to let every one know what we are hoping to
18 accomplish. I want to share this with you.

19 Remember us, the elderly, those on fixed
20 incomes, and those who are handicapped. We are a
21 part of America -- part of the heart of America. We
22 have always, I want to emphasize this, and will
23 continue to pay our fair share for as long as we can.

24 This was one of the founding principles of
25 the PMAs. We paid more at the beginning with the

Hearing

1 understanding of a long-term reliability product.

2 We've all built this great nation with,
3 yes, our blood, our sweat and our tears. We
4 sincerely hope you will help us by recognizing these
5 facts that I and the rest of these Ladies and
6 Gentlemen have presented. Thank you.

7 MS. AZAR: Thank you. Craig Herbert.

8 MR. HERBERT: Hello. My name is Craig
9 Herbert. Last name, H-e-r-b-e-r-t.

10 I'm the General Manager of NorVal Electric
11 Cooperative in Glasgow. I'm also a member and a
12 landowner.

13 The DOE has promised to have robust
14 stakeholder involvement and you only allow three
15 minutes, and I drove similar to Ruby, but not quite.
16 I'm at 300 miles from home to get here.

17 I don't believe using the reasonable
18 person standard one would consider three minutes per
19 person robust involvement.

20 What I'm afraid of is that DOE has already
21 made up their mind on what they plan to do with the
22 Western system, and we're just using the workshops
23 and listening sessions to smooth over things with
24 Congress.

25 With the information that has been

Hearing

1 released, it appears that DOE wants to create an
2 artificial market for alternative renewables where
3 they compete with our cost base federal power that we
4 currently receive.

5 If alternative renewables were cost
6 effective, we should not have to supply them with all
7 the tax breaks and artificial adders to promote them.

8 NorVal is a rural electric cooperative and
9 it covers about 9,700 square miles. We have about
10 2,200 miles of transmission and distribution line.
11 We service 3,219 members. Our service territory is
12 bigger than six states in the United States, that's
13 plus or minus 10 percent.

14 We also serve the west half of Fort Peck
15 Indian Reservation. So what the DOE does will have a
16 big effect on us because we have a lot of area and a
17 lot of people to cover.

18 There have been statements made that say
19 the Western system is in bad shape. It's not in our
20 area. The Western system is in good to very good
21 shape for our area. And some of the areas have been
22 rebuilt. And the reliability of Western has been
23 very good to us.

24 And I want to make one more comment on the
25 age of systems. Age is not a sole factor for

Hearing

1 replacement. I've had brand new poles get tore down
2 and have a 50-year-old pole standing next to it and
3 it stands up.

4 So age is not the sole market or sole
5 factor for replacement. Thank you.

6 MS. AZAR: Thank you. Brent McRae.

7 MR. McRAE: Brent McRae, M-c-R-a-e.

8 I am Brent McRae, a livestock producer
9 from Jordan, Montana, Garfield County. Thank you for
10 the opportunity to address this listening session.

11 Garfield County was formed in 1919 with
12 the Missouri River at its northern border. Following
13 the completion of Fort Peck dam in 1940, the waters
14 of Fort Peck Reservoir became our north border.
15 Garfield County now boasts 179 square miles of water,
16 covering what was once the most fertile-productive
17 land in the county. The value of the last alfalfa
18 seed crop produced on the Missouri River in Garfield
19 County exceeded the cumulative price the federal
20 government paid landowners displaced for a greater
21 good. Some of these relocated "Fort Peck" refugees
22 became McCone Electric Cooperative members, with
23 their families remaining members today.

24 The \$100 million cost of construction of
25 Fort Peck has been an excellent investment in terms

Hearing

1 of flood control, and in the production of clean,
2 environmentally friendly, hydro electricity.

3 Long-term alliances formed between the
4 federal government and our local electric
5 cooperatives to provide electrical service to
6 sparsely populated rural areas improved the quality
7 of life for members. This original, primary, and
8 ongoing objective firmly mandates that electric
9 cooperatives be included as a primary stakeholder in
10 the future decision-making process of Western Area
11 Power.

12 As a rancher, affordable electricity to
13 power wells providing water for livestock is doing
14 more than practicing good animal husbandry. Consumer
15 nutrition and safety is elevated.

16 As live cattle and beef exports rise, the
17 ability of American cattle producers to provide a
18 sustainable and renewable and nutritional product is
19 essential for America's national security, its food
20 security, and availability of an exportable resource
21 that strengthens the United States globally.

22 Without reasonably priced electric
23 service, an increase in animal health issues may
24 arise from communal drinking ponds that are also
25 inhabited by other animal species.

Hearing

1 In addition, animals may congregate in
2 riparian areas, potentially causing stream bed
3 erosion. This may cause environmental and
4 bio-security concerns to downstream users.

5 Livestock producers incur additional costs
6 above the electric service by paying for line
7 extensions to remote areas, as well as the cost of
8 drilling the well and setup.

9 These large investments rely on the
10 initial promise of power being supplied "at the
11 lowest possible cost to consumer" as specified by
12 statute.

13 Ranchers, as self-employed business
14 owners, understand the need for maintenance and
15 ongoing technological improvements to WAPA generation
16 and transmission. These costs are included in the
17 rates we pay our local electric cooperatives.

18 This investment is redeemable to us in the
19 form of affordable, consistent, and reliable power.
20 This methodology is quite logical; the users are the
21 payers for improvements and/or programs that benefit
22 the paying consumers.

23 However, we also recognize the
24 foolhardiness of morphing the Power Marketing
25 Authorities into a Research and Development

Hearing

1 instrument.

2 Western Area Power Authority has a long
3 and distinguished history of fulfilling its primary
4 mission; providing low cost electricity to consumers.

5 This allows for an increased quality of
6 life and private business opportunities to grow
7 America. Thank you.

8 MS. AZAR: Thank you. DeeDee Isaacs.

9 Good evening. My name is DeeDee Isaacs,
10 I-s-a-a-c-s.

11 Speaking of technology, the I-Pad went
12 off. There we go. As a Director at Tongue River
13 Electric Cooperative, my fellow board members and I
14 face challenges everyday. The fires this summer have
15 impacted our service territory and our facility.

16 Western and DOE want to make the grid more
17 resilient and efficient while reducing costs to
18 consumers. We all heard three and-a-half years ago
19 how change was good. What we didn't hear was with
20 change comes more cost, hidden fees and no
21 accountability.

22 How can change, being dictated by
23 Secretary Chu, happen without additional cost to the
24 rural electrical users in our area?

25 I, for one, have little faith that DOE can₄₀

Hearing

1 make the above-mentioned changes without raising
2 rates.

3 Our service territory is made up of
4 approximately 2,737 members. Approximately half are
5 from the Northern Cheyenne Tribe. These, along with
6 other members, face many difficulties living in this
7 remote section of southeastern Montana.

8 Travel alone to the nearest city for
9 doctoring is 130 miles plus, one way. We do not take
10 our power for granted. It is a privilege to have
11 safe, reliable, and cheaper than the national average
12 made possible through our WAPA allocation.

13 As a hardware store owner, living in
14 Ashland and having my customers choosing between
15 buying groceries, making necessary home improvements,
16 or paying all or part of a possibly increasing power
17 bill due to DOE Secretary Chu's March 16 memorandum,
18 is really very upsetting.

19 The DOE "one size fits all" plan is far
20 too broad and prohibitively expensive. It's nothing
21 more than an unproven, untested, and costly idea.

22 A nationally directed policy would be
23 unnecessary, costly, inequitable, and inconsistent
24 with the legal obligations imposed on the PMAs and
25 the Secretary, and politically unsustainable.

Hearing

1 After watching our crews at Tongue River
2 Electric replace poles and wires day and night for
3 over nine days during the fire storm that we
4 experienced, restoring the power, keeping the members
5 informed, and searching for hard to replace parts and
6 pieces, it made me think if our state and federal
7 government operated following the cooperative
8 principle, what a country we would be.

9 Thank you.

10 MS. AZAR: Thank up. Maude
11 Grantham-Richards?

12 Sam Gundermann?

13 MR. GUNDERMANN: Sam Gundermann,
14 G-u-n-d-e-r-m-a-n-n.

15 I'm a Trustee for NorVal Electric in
16 Glasgow and I am also a third generation farmer with
17 both dry land and center-pivot irrigation.

18 I make my living from the land and farming
19 is a business with small margins. I live in a remote
20 area and whenever energy prices change, they have a
21 dramatic effect on my operation.

22 The proposed artificial adders to Western
23 as outlined in Secretary Chu's March 16th directive
24 will be very hard on my family and my operations. It
25 will do nothing for the power that we currently

Hearing

1 receive from Western.

2 If our electric prices are artificially
3 increased, this will cause more people to leave the
4 area already sparsely populated.

5 Thank you.

6 MS. AZAR: Thank you. Dave Hayden?

7 MR. HAYDEN: I'm Dave Hayden. Last name,
8 H-a-y-d-e-n.

9 I'm one of the walk-ins. I didn't prepare
10 a speech, but I just want to let everybody know these
11 people up here giving these speeches are wonderful
12 people. They all help each other. And I'm concerned
13 about this causing big inflation and creating
14 hardship on our elderly people that created the
15 Co-ops and got them in the good balance that they're
16 in, and this would be a break in the system. Thank
17 you.

18 MS. AZAR: Thank you. Ray Ellis?

19 MR. ELLIS: Spell my last name, E-l-l-i-s.
20 It's pretty easy.

21 My name is Ray Ellis. I am the General
22 Manager at Lincoln Electric Cooperative, Eureka,
23 Montana. I know we have had kind of a contest here
24 of who has traveled the furthest. But I think I've
25 got that one covered.

Hearing

1 Lincoln Electric serves about 4,000
2 members in about a thousand square miles of northwest
3 Montana in some extremely rugged country where it's
4 heavily timbered, and very expensive to maintain and
5 to deliver energy there.

6 I'm also the Chair of the Board of
7 Directors of PNGC Power, which is Pacific Northwest
8 Generation Cooperative. And that Cooperative is made
9 up of 14 like cooperatives in seven western states.
10 I'm also here to represent Lincoln and that group.

11 I also -- I also plan to attend some of
12 the BPA meetings later in the year, but I drove all
13 the way to Billings because this is such an important
14 issue for my members and the people that I represent.

15 One thing that needs to be clear is that
16 the directive that was given to the PMAs is not about
17 regular maintenance and upgrades to their system.
18 It's not about changing poles and upgrading
19 transformers that may be at capacity.

20 This is about a fundamental change in how
21 energy is generated and transmitted across the area
22 of the northwest and beyond.

23 The proposed operational infrastructure
24 changes to the PMAs in Secretary Chu's directive
25 ignores some of the original purposes or the purpose

Hearing

1 of the PMAs and the relationships they have with
2 their customers.

3 It also has -- shows kind of a lack of
4 understanding about the tremendous operational record
5 that both WAPA and Bonneville have. Their systems
6 are extremely reliable.

7 And in fact so much so that they're
8 probably the Indie of not only the United States but
9 of the world.

10 The industry-wide reliability standards
11 that are suggested in the directive will add cost.
12 There is no doubt about that. While it is true that
13 -- it's true that integrating these resources -- that
14 other areas in the country and the world have EIMs
15 and they have other methods -- have integrated more
16 intermittent resources and such, but also take note
17 that their rates are substantially higher than ours.

18 In fact so much so that there are many
19 parts of the country that would love to get their
20 hands on our power.

21 Every change in -- that, of the changes
22 that he's suggesting are -- in his response letter to
23 the Congressional delegation that sent him a list of
24 concerns, shows that all those examples of
25 reliability issues are, really took place in IOUs, in₄₅

Hearing

1 southern California, Georgia, and the northeast.
2 They did not involve any PMAs that we have -- that I
3 know of.

4 Every change in the Secretary's suggested
5 directive will increase the cost of power to my
6 members. It will take from those who can least
7 afford the cost increases and pass -- they will do --
8 excuse me, that they will -- it will cost them more
9 money.

10 I have, everyday in my office I have
11 people come in that are at their wits' end trying to
12 figure out how they can afford their power bill. And
13 I have to find a way, kind of imaginative ways to
14 help them meet that or pay that bill. And it's only
15 going to get worse if these costs keep increasing.

16 We are seeing increased costs in the
17 Bonneville area, roughly last year about 30 percent
18 of our wholesale power rate. The '14, '15 rate
19 period, they're already suggesting another 20
20 percent.

21 And these are to integrate some of the
22 suggested things that Secretary Chu has in that
23 directive that Bonneville has already started to do.

24 One thing that he does mention in there is
25 that he wants to involve stakeholders. And I want to

Hearing

1 make sure that the Secretary understands, the only
2 stakeholders that are important in this are the ones
3 that are paying the bills. And that's the members
4 and the end users. We are the ones that are paying
5 that.

6 And I also noticed that very seldom does
7 the federal government actually come to cooperatives
8 and ask what we think about what is going on. We
9 don't have the managers, the staff, the Board of
10 Directors do not have a vested interest in making
11 money delivering energy to our members.

12 The things that we -- the underlying thing
13 that we do and we do very well is we deliver reliable
14 and affordable power to places that nobody else would
15 touch. No IOU in the country would try to deliver
16 power where we do.

17 Thank you.

18 MS. AZAR: Thank you. Betty Campbell?

19 MS. CAMPBELL: My name is Betty Campbell,
20 the last name C-a-m-p-b-e-l-l.

21 I'm from Fort Belknap Indian Reservation
22 in north central Montana where I was born. Just a
23 little background so you understand where I'm coming
24 from.

25 I am -- I guess I'm the same age as the

Hearing

1 oldest transformer in WAPA. But I fully expect to be
2 growing strong for another 20 years.

3 I am actively engaged in cattle ranching.
4 I raise longhorn and Angus cattle and a few quarter
5 horses. I do my own irrigating. And I cut hay to
6 put up for my winter feed for my cattle.

7 My husband Bud and I ranched on Fort
8 Belknap Indian Reservation from 1964 until his death
9 in '96. He had been a Prisoner of War in World War
10 II, he was captured on Bataan Peninsula in the
11 Philippines, survived the death march, three
12 and-a-half years in Japanese prison camps, being
13 starved, beaten and used as slave labor and that
14 contributed to his too early death.

15 I spent 35 years in education, the last 28
16 were in the Hays-Lodge School District as an
17 elementary teacher, and then District Elementary
18 Principal. I retired in '91. Currently I'm serving
19 as Director on the Big Flat Electric Cooperative
20 Board where I have served for 13 years, and I've been
21 the Secretary/Treasurer for several terms.

22 Where we live we are in a very harsh
23 weather area where the winter temperatures often drop
24 to below 40 degrees below zero, and in the summer
25 often 100 degrees and above, as it's been for the

Hearing

1 past little while now.

2 Our Reservation has a very high poverty
3 rate, and it's among the highest unemployment areas
4 in the nation.

5 Agriculture is the Number 1 driver of the
6 economy. In fact, it's about the sole industry, but
7 it doesn't involve a large number of the population.

8 In our very sparsely populated area, it
9 takes a mile or more of power line to connect a
10 single individual household, like most of the Co-ops
11 in Montana.

12 With low incomes, it's so difficult for
13 people to afford the electricity we're so dependent
14 on to operate our farms and ranches, homes and
15 school.

16 An increase in our power rates would
17 probably necessitate the closing of one of our two
18 school buildings in the district, probably in the
19 next year or so.

20 Lands in our part of the United States are
21 impacted both positively and negatively by the
22 Missouri River Basin Hydro projects, and one of the
23 most positive impacts is affordable electricity.
24 Affordable electricity has helped us survive and
25 produce food for other people to survive. We're not

49

Hearing

1 against renewable energy or changing aspects of the
2 grid to accommodate the renewable energy. The big
3 question is who pays for it? If changes are made for
4 new purposes to a grid that is serving us very well,
5 we think we should not have to pay those increased
6 costs.

7 If changes are put in the rates, we end up
8 paying, if we can. We need the electricity. The
9 people in our area are stretched very thin
10 economically and are not the ones that should pay for
11 these new purposes.

12 Native Americans were the original
13 environmentalists. They took only what they needed
14 from the land and gave thanks and didn't abuse it.

15 I have children, grandchildren, a couple
16 dozen great-grandchildren, and I am as concerned
17 about the environment as anyone. And as I said,
18 we're not against renewable energy or environmental
19 issues.

20 Someone also talked about farm and ranch
21 conservation, and I'll tell you, farmers and ranchers
22 are the ultimate conservationists. We have to take
23 care of our land so it can take care of us.

24 If we can't afford electricity, we can't
25 afford to do some of the things that protect and

Hearing

1 conserve our land.

2 One of my husband's favorite adages was,
3 "if it ain't broke, don't fix it." And I think that
4 applies here.

5 Our power grid is working very well. It
6 may be old but it's not broke. It's very well
7 maintained. Our power is very reliable and right now
8 it's relatively affordable. And affordable
9 electricity is one thing that helps us feed America
10 and survive the harsh climate of north Montana.

11 I regard myself as a strong independent
12 woman, and I am proud of the fact that we have paid
13 the full cost with interest of the electricity from
14 the dams and the transmission lines that deliver it.

15 Please do not implement changes that cause
16 us to pay for other purposes, don't price us out of
17 independence and our ability to help feed this great
18 nation.

19 Thank you.

20 MS. AZAR: Thank you. Bob Makelky? I
21 hope I pronounced that right. He's from Goldenwest
22 Electric Co-op. He's not here? Okay.

23 So I really did not pronounce his name
24 wrong. How about Dave Kelsey?

25 MR. KELSEY: My last is name Kelsey,

Hearing

1 K-e-l-s-e-y.

2 I am Dave Kelsey. I farm and ranch. I
3 happen to be one of the closer people to the meeting
4 tonight. I'm about 25 miles northwest of here. And
5 I farm and ranch in the Molt community. I'm also a
6 member and Trustee of Yellowstone Valley Electric,
7 which is located in Huntley, Montana.

8 When this program began with WAPA,
9 not-for-profit utilities, including Co-ops such as
10 Yellowstone Valley Electric Cooperative, agreed to
11 buy power at what was then above market price for a
12 guarantee of continued access of reliable and
13 affordable power, and a promise of lower rates on the
14 long term.

15 To this point, the program has worked
16 quite well. The utilities, such as Yellowstone
17 Valley Electric, help recover 100 percent of the
18 capital cost of the transmission and hydropower
19 projects. Additionally, the rates pay for the
20 operation and maintenance of such facilities,
21 including the multi-purpose portion of the dams and
22 reservoirs. Co-ops like Yellowstone Valley are
23 paying their own way.

24 Not only are we repaying the costs to run
25 the system, our rates ensure the continued success of

Hearing

1 the additional benefits that the PMAs provide,
2 including flood control, recreation, navigation and
3 irrigation.

4 Affordable electricity is a necessity for
5 Co-ops that serve in low customer density areas.

6 We serve some of the most economically
7 challenged consumers in the U.S. The cost per
8 consumer to distribute power in these areas is high
9 and affordable energy is the only way the
10 not-for-profit systems will work.

11 Much of Montana consists of low density
12 areas, and Yellowstone Valley Electric Cooperative,
13 Incorporated is no different.

14 We actually serve six counties, including
15 here and Yellowstone County. Some of our service
16 territory is like everyone else's, with less than one
17 meter per line. Co-ops extended into these areas
18 based on the partnership formed with PMAs. The
19 affordable, reliable energy has played a very
20 significant role in supporting rural communities and
21 especially ag producers.

22 As an ag producer myself, I would like to
23 discuss irrigation and the role that affordable
24 energy plays in that process.

25 Unfortunately in the Molt location, we

Hearing

1 don't have much water. And this year we are
2 extremely short of water. So I'm relying on my
3 neighbors down here in Yellowstone Valley, that we
4 have approximately 200 irrigation operations, and
5 these folks are very conservation-oriented. They use
6 just the amount of water that is needed for the crop.
7 They are able to monitor the fertilizer that they put
8 on their crop.

9 And also it creates less leaching of the
10 fertilizer. It's a real great program. And
11 therefore it allows more water to remain in the
12 streams to go downstream to be used by municipalities
13 and fish and water fowl, so, and that, especially in
14 a time of drought like we're in right now, is a very
15 important thing.

16 I don't know how many of you know, I'm
17 sure more of you are getting more aware of it all
18 along, currently we are in -- about 80 percent of the
19 U.S. is in one form of a drought or another. And I
20 can't think of a worse time to throw artificial
21 adders on a system than when we're in the midst of
22 this drought. This drought is going to have
23 far-reaching effects. Prices of food for all of our
24 consumers are going to go up.

25 This is a huge event that we're having

Hearing

1 here, and to have that in conjunction with anything
2 in terms of an artificially inflated power would seem
3 to be out of line.

4 As was stated before, our Cooperative is
5 all for efficient use of energy. We promote ground
6 sourcing pumps and air-to-air heat pumps as well.
7 And we're very proud of the fact that we have over
8 500 ground source heat pumps, and 400 air-to-air heat
9 pumps on our system. We promote that all the time,
10 as well as energy efficient appliances. We are
11 trying to do what we can to minimize our requirement
12 on the grid and have people look out for their best
13 options.

14 The proposals outlined in Secretary Chu's
15 memo will simply result in rate increases to federal
16 power customers. These changes are counter to the
17 guarantees and promises made when not-for-profit
18 utilities entered into the agreement with the federal
19 government. Millions of Americans staked their
20 livelihood on the success of this program. The
21 proposals to alter the PMAs undermine that success.

22 And we can only hope that these listening
23 sessions are in fact valid, and people are listening.

24 We hope that the decision has not already
25 been made to incorporate higher rates to the system. 55

Hearing

1 Thank you.

2 MS. AZAR: Thank you. Alan See?

3 MR. SEE: My name is Alan See, last name
4 is spelled S-e-e.

5 I am the Manager of Tongue River Electric
6 Co-op in Ashland. We just had a fire down there and
7 replaced about 250 poles, of that, 120 were
8 transmission poles. And the only way that was done
9 was by the cooperation from people like the WAPA
10 people at Fort Peck that loaned us cross arms and
11 hard wire. We really appreciate our WAPA
12 partnership, and as Betty Campbell said, if it isn't
13 broke, don't fix it.

14 WAPA and the BPA are just about the only
15 parts of the federal government that make money. And
16 this particular idea of Secretary Chu's will probably
17 still allow them to make money, but it will be on the
18 backs of our rate payers.

19 At Tongue River Electric, we have 256
20 elderly Northern Cheyenne members who are subsidized
21 by a contract from WAPA. What is going to happen to
22 that contract when the price of WAPA power comes up
23 to equal to the price of market power?

24 They will suffer to the tune of \$400 per
25 year per retired Northern Cheyenne member. And they 56

Hearing

1 have trouble paying their bills already.

2 Thank you.

3 MS. AZAR: Thank you. Tim Stephens.

4 MR. STEPHENS: Tim Stephens, it is
5 spelled, S-t-e-p-h-e-n-s.

6 Thank you for listening to us tonight.
7 I'm the Manager of Park Electric in Livingston,
8 Montana. Secretary Chu's memo has presented some
9 interesting and controversial points. After reading
10 the memo, a person would think the WAPA customers are
11 unable to work together in order to come up with the
12 solutions that benefit each other, or society as a
13 whole.

14 As it turns out, it's quite the opposite.
15 We have been working together since the beginning of
16 the Power Marketing Association's creation. When
17 federal power was first being marketed, the leaders
18 of this great concept came to the Co-ops, tribes and
19 municipalities looking for a guaranteed sale of the
20 power they planned to produce. They wanted to be
21 sure there was going to be a return on their
22 investments. Park Electric was given the opportunity
23 to purchase some of this power. Park agreed to take
24 60 percent of its power requirements from WAPA. Even
25 though, at that time, WAPA power carried a higher

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Hearing

1 cost than the energy that was being purchased from
2 Montana Power Company.

3 What Park Electric agreed to was to pay a
4 premium price for a product that was being purchased
5 by an organization with business principles much
6 closer to its own. This helped to ensure sale of all
7 of the power produced by WAPA and the success of the
8 concept of federal power.

9 Working in cooperation with other great
10 organizations, like Central Montana Electric Power
11 Cooperative and Basin Electric Power Cooperative, we
12 have been able to expand our power supply portfolio
13 to include many other generation sources, including
14 the integration of 780 megawatts of wind power owned
15 by Basin Electric. With cooperation like this we
16 have been able to achieve a common goal of a stable
17 power supply at a reasonable price which we then pass
18 on to the end user at an affordable rate creating a
19 win for everybody involved. This is something we
20 don't see everyday in today's world.

21 As a small "hometown" distribution
22 cooperative, we maintain two-way communications with
23 our members. We understand their needs and they
24 understand ours.

25 We continually work to communicate the

Hearing

1 benefits of energy efficiency. Our members get it.
2 With 15 distributed generation services on our small
3 system, like many co-ops, Park Electric has been very
4 active in small, privately owned, renewable energy
5 sources. To be involved in the cooperation between
6 my electric cooperative and our members has been one
7 of the most rewarding aspects of my 32 year co-op
8 career.

9 If the PMAs across the country are forced
10 to follow the direction outlined in Secretary Chu's
11 memo, the increased transmission costs due to
12 upgrades for the purpose of integrating new renewable
13 energies will likely cause rates to increase to a
14 point that would devastate the small businesses and
15 family ranches we serve.

16 In the past, upgrades to the transmission
17 system have been paid for by the cost causers, the
18 developers. It is not right that our members should
19 be required to bear the cost of transmission upgrades
20 so an energy development -- developer can transmit
21 power across a system and pocket the profits.

22 It's going to be very difficult for me to
23 convince our members that it's okay for us to
24 increase their rates because the Department of Energy
25 mandated changes to a program that has been working

Hearing

1 very well, and very economically, for decades.

2 I guess in the future when I drive the 80
3 miles from our office in Livingston to Melville,
4 Montana, passing hundreds of miles of our line
5 feeding very few people, I can let the residents of
6 that tiny community know that one of the reasons
7 their rates went up was so that we could put an
8 electric car charging station where their post office
9 used to be.

10 Now they can almost make it to the grocery
11 store on one charge.

12 MS. AZAR: Thank you. Roger Solberg?

13 MR. SOLBERG: My name is Roger Solberg,
14 S-o-l-b-e-r-g, my last name.

15 I'm a third-generation farmer in north
16 central Montana. I'm also a member of the Big Flat
17 Electric Cooperative. I would like to express some
18 of my concerns regarding changes the Department of
19 Energy is planning for Western Area Power
20 Administration.

21 I live in a very remote area of Montana.
22 My nearest neighbor lives five miles away from me.
23 My co-op maintains an average of almost one
24 and-a-half miles of distribution line between each
25 member. As a result of our sparse population, the

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Hearing

1 cost of power delivered to us is high and our rates
2 reflect that.

3 Western's cost based power supply is a key
4 part of keeping our rates at an affordable level.

5 In my view, what the DOE is planning will
6 profoundly change the way Western's rates will be
7 structured.

8 If Secretary Chu has his way, people like
9 me and my neighbors in rural America will subsidize
10 power costs for people in high density population
11 areas.

12 To quote Secretary Chu "America's
13 continued global competitiveness in the 21st Century
14 will be significantly affected by whether we can
15 efficiently produce and distribute electricity to our
16 businesses and consumers."

17 This global competitiveness is just as
18 real in agriculture. Margins have never been tighter
19 for me as a farmer. As grain prices increase, input
20 costs increase at the same pace. Farmers and
21 ranchers from all over the world are competing in the
22 same marketplace, paying the same prices for
23 machinery, chemicals, and fertilizer, and receiving
24 the same commodity prices.

25 As America farmers, our ability to

Hearing

1 efficiently raise our crops and remain sustainable
2 from year to year depends a great deal on the
3 competitive edge that we can maintain over farmers in
4 other countries. Each additional cost I must pay
5 creates a thinner bottom line for me as I compete in
6 that global economy.

7 But in an even broader view, as our
8 government bureaucracy adds more and more regulations
9 and mandates to the way we do business, whether it be
10 as farmers and ranchers or as producers and
11 distributors of electricity, it gets more and more
12 difficult to stay competitive globally.

13 A plan of continued upgrading and
14 modernization of our transmission power grid is
15 essential, but a cookie cutter, top down approach
16 coming from Washington, D.C. is not the right way to
17 go about this. Western has a track record of
18 reliability to its customers, and this consistent
19 reliability is a result of ongoing investment back
20 into its grid.

21 It's people like me and my neighbors who
22 are making this investment when we pay our power
23 bill. If alternative renewables, such as wind and
24 solar generation, are going to gain access to
25 Western's grid, I feel that they need to buy into the

Hearing

1 system that we have already financed and continued to
2 maintain.

3 They should also pay their fair share of
4 upgrading costs that are in line with the benefits
5 that they will receive.

6 If they can't, then they are not
7 economically sustainable and should be reevaluated as
8 to whether or not they are viable sources of energy.
9 Thank you.

10 MS. AZAR: Thank you. Charles Miske?

11 MR. MISKE: My last name is M-i-s-k-e.

12 Good evening. I have come about 265 miles
13 to be here to speak. Goldenwest was incorporated in
14 1942. We buy about 40 percent of our power from
15 WAPA, the other 60 percent comes from Basin Electric.

16 We have, as Ray said, some of us, we have
17 about 650 members. And we have just about, just a
18 little over one consumer for two miles of line, a
19 little over that. We operate in three counties in
20 North Dakota and three counties in Montana.

21 I wanted to bring up a little bit about
22 we're supposed to be competitive with other
23 countries. And I've been trucking -- we farm and
24 ranch both. And I've been on the same place longer
25 than Goldenwest has been in business.

Hearing

1 Anyway, we -- when I've trucked stuff to
2 Minot, North Dakota, I get a chance to go by Beulah
3 and all through those stations that are generation
4 stations. And I have witnessed a change in the
5 emissions coming out and it's gotten to the point
6 where they're -- well, it's gotten to the point where
7 we can't build them anymore because there's too much
8 red tape to controlling it.

9 But how can we compete with countries that
10 get our coal shipped over there, and build a
11 generation plant and don't do anything as far as
12 emissions, just let it burn?

13 I don't -- I believe in controlling
14 emissions, but to a point. I mean, it's ridiculous
15 what they're expecting of us. And I wanted to bring
16 that up.

17 And a generation, coal-fired generation at
18 this time is almost 50 percent of our power source.
19 Wind energy is a great thing, but it's -- when it's
20 at capacity, it's only 40 percent effective.

21 And I have a good friend that lives north
22 of Bismarck, they have a big wind farm next to his
23 land and they're already getting concerned about all
24 the birds that are getting killed because they're
25 running into the propellers. And it's -- we've got

Hearing

1 to have a little more common sense.

2 I guess I'll just let it go at that.

3 Thank you.

4 MS. AZAR: Thank you. Shiell Anderson?

5 MR. ANDERSON: S-h-i-e-l-l. My comments
6 are presented as an open letter to Secretary Chu.

7 My name is Shiell Anderson, and like most
8 folks, I gave up most of the day to come down to
9 Billings to speak to you all and give my input.

10 I'm a life-long rancher and former state
11 legislator from north of Livingston, Montana.
12 Although some of the directives of your March 16,
13 2012 memo may have merit, I have serious concerns
14 about many of them and about the cost to implement
15 those directives.

16 Specifically, the expensive directive of
17 extending transmission to "variable resources," read
18 wind and solar resources. I believe it's untimely
19 considering the abundance of inexpensive natural gas
20 that is currently coming online, and which produces
21 considerably more energy than wind and solar could
22 hope to.

23 Wind and solar energy have been the
24 darlings of the green movement for some time but with
25 low carbon emissions from natural gas, I believe that

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Hearing

1 wind and solar energy sources need to be able to
2 support themselves without further taxpayer or rate
3 payer support. This administration has had enough
4 trouble, I believe, with overinvestment in these
5 alternative sources, and of course the
6 much-publicized failure of Solyndra demonstrates this
7 point.

8 Further, investment for electrical vehicle
9 deployment should be prefaced, I believe, with some
10 actual desire for electric cars by more people than
11 the Hollywood elite.

12 Electric cars at this point are simply too
13 expensive to buy and too inconvenient to use for all
14 but the very few.

15 You claim these changes to the grid will
16 "create jobs throughout the United States." There
17 would be some job creation but at what and whose
18 cost?

19 My local electric cooperative estimates
20 that your directives would raise rates by 35 percent
21 which, on my family's ranch, would equate to \$6,500
22 per year. The result is a sacrifice of market driven
23 investment and jobs for "stimulus" type jobs, which
24 unfortunately don't even have the benefit even of a
25 Congressional vetting.

Hearing

1 Further, your proposals add a large
2 financial burden on rate payers at a time when the
3 national economy is struggling to get back on track.
4 We have significant electricity expenses in our state
5 due to cold winters, hot, dry summers, and the need
6 to irrigate our crops. I know there are numerous
7 farmers and ranchers who are barely getting by not to
8 mention those that are on fixed incomes, and an
9 uncontrollable input cost, such as the drastic rate
10 increase your directives would cause might very well
11 be the tipping point for these people, especially in
12 a year like we're having this year.

13 Add to this, the additional taxes and fees
14 that we will soon face with the Affordable Care Act
15 and other tax increases proposed by the Obama
16 administration, and it will truly help to kill jobs
17 at a time when we need more sustainable employment.

18 Finally, I would suggest that there should
19 be a clear nexus between those who would pay for
20 these directives and those who would benefit. If
21 these actions would help all citizens of our country
22 to have more secure grid and greener power, then they
23 should be paid for by everyone, and not just those
24 who simply get their power from the PMAs.

25 I ask that you please consider how your

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Hearing

1 proposals adversely affect those of us who rely on
2 power from the PMAs, and you see fit to withdraw
3 them.

4 I also hope that those representatives of
5 our Congressional delegation, I assume there are some
6 here tonight, are taking good notes of the widespread
7 and vociferous objection to these directives.

8 Thank you very much for your
9 consideration.

10 MS. AZAR: Thank you. Herb Chrudimsky?
11 I'm sorry he's not here. Debbie Kindle?

12 MS. KINDLE: My name is Debbie Kindle,
13 K-i-n-d-l-e. I'm the billing clerk at Big Flat
14 Electric Cooperative. It's my job to do the billing,
15 collecting, and the disconnecting of accounts for
16 nonpayment. On behalf of Big Flat Electric and
17 members we serve, I want to take this opportunity to
18 object to the changes proposed in the Chu memo.

19 By way of introduction, Big Flat Electric
20 is a small rural electric cooperative. The service
21 area of Big Flat Electric covers approximately 10,000
22 square miles in north central Montana. The area is
23 bordered on the north by the Canadian border and on
24 the south by the Missouri River.

25 The density of miles of line to meters

Hearing

1 connected is 1.25. To put in perspective the size of
2 our service area, you could put eight Rhode Islands
3 within our boundaries.

4 The Cooperative serves the rural areas in
5 the eastern portion of Blaine County, all of Phillips
6 County and portions of the western half of Valley
7 County, excluding the areas of Milk River Valley and
8 towns located along the Burlington Northern Santa Fe
9 Railway, all being served by Northwestern Energy
10 Company.

11 Big Flat Electric also serves the southern
12 portion of Fort Belknap Indian Reservation serving
13 about 570 meters.

14 The Fort Belknap Indian Reservation is
15 homeland to the Gros Ventre and Assiniboine Tribes.
16 It's the fourth largest Indian Reservation in
17 Montana. The area is 1,055 square miles, just a
18 little under the State of Rhode Island.

19 The Reservation is an isolated community
20 with an extremely high unemployment rate. Big Flat
21 Electric serves the community of Hays and Lodgepole.
22 The Bureau of Indian Affairs conducted an Indian
23 Labor Force survey and found an unemployment rate of
24 76 percent. Of those employed, 51 percent are listed
25 as below the poverty level. These figures show that

Hearing

1 Fort Belknap is truly a distressed area.

2 To the east of Fort Belknap, the
3 population of Phillips County is 4,098. The labor
4 force in Phillips County as of July 1st, 2007 was
5 2,000.

6 The largest employer within the boundary
7 of Phillips County is the United States Government.
8 The prior largest employer in Big Flat Electric's
9 largest user was Zortman Mining Company, which
10 employed over 300 employees.

11 In 1997, Zortman Mining declared
12 bankruptcy and laid off all but nine employees and
13 closed the mine. The mine has been and will remain
14 in a stage of stagnant reclamation.

15 Big Flat Electric lost over half of its
16 load with the mine closing. The economy of Big Flat
17 Electric is approximately 80 percent dependent on
18 agriculture. Large cattle ranching type operations
19 support approximately 40 percent with dry land wheat
20 farming and some irrigation hay land the other 40
21 percent.

22 Economy of scale is low due to extreme
23 drought conditions and low pricing of products.

24 The benefits that preference power and
25 affordable rates is as follows:

Hearing

1 1. In an area where we're losing membership
2 to attrition due to older members selling to large
3 out-of-state buyers and larger adjoining operations,
4 preference power brings relief to the remaining farms
5 and ranchers of the area. Any rate increase would
6 negatively affect our service area and disconnects
7 will increase bringing more hardship due to inability
8 to pay.

9 2. The economy of scale of our service area
10 cannot afford to subsidize rates in areas with strong
11 economies. We do not object to upgrades. That being
12 said, those who use and receive the benefits should
13 pay for the service. Our members paid for the
14 service we received from Western Area Power
15 Administration and the Fort Peck Dam for 75 years.
16 We should not have to pay for the benefits of others
17 in markets far away.

18 3. The Chu memo is more about paying for
19 markets far away at our expense and not a move to
20 modernize the grid. A WAPA grid that has been very
21 reliable and if left as it is managed, will continue
22 to provide reliable, affordable electricity to our
23 members that have paid for it all these years.

24 With the above comments, and as a matter
25 of public record and with respect, Big Flat Electric

Hearing

1 expresses its strong opinion against the measures
2 contained in the Chu memo. Our opposition is not
3 because we are against renewable integration, it is
4 because we are for affordable electricity in a
5 sparsely populated low income area of this nation.

6 And on behalf of the membership, I'm here
7 to present the negative attributes implementation of
8 items in this memo will bring to our area.

9 MS. AZAR: Thank you. Al Thiessen?

10 MR. THIESSEN: Allen Thiessen,
11 T-h-i-e-s-s-e-n.

12 I'm Allen Thiessen. I started a small
13 business in Lambert, Montana in July of 1972. I
14 later took on a partner and we have been in business
15 there ever since. We employ four full time, three
16 seasonal, and up to five part-time employees. These
17 are technicians, mechanics, and bus drivers.

18 We could use more help if it was
19 available.

20 Lambert is a small town of about 200
21 people in a county of about 5,000 population.
22 Building and maintaining a small business for 40
23 years in a very rural area can be challenging at
24 best. One of these challenges is having reliable
25 affordable electricity.

Hearing

1 We are served by a rural electric
2 cooperative, and I'm currently serving on its Board
3 of Directors.

4 In our very rural area, like many of the
5 others here, the density is about 1.1 co-op member
6 per mile of line, which makes it very expensive to
7 serve. It's very challenging for them to keep their
8 rates affordable and competitive with more populated
9 areas.

10 One of the factors that enables our
11 cooperative to keep the electric rate reasonable in a
12 high cost area is that they have had the benefit of
13 an allocation of preference power from the Western
14 Area Power Administration and some availability of
15 the federal transmission system.

16 This renewable hydropower is the least
17 expensive source of power in our area. Because of
18 the limits of the preference allocation, the
19 cooperative also has to buy other more expensive
20 power, including a significant amount of power from
21 wind generation. By blending these costs, they can
22 serve us at rates that we can still afford.

23 I have very serious concerns that the
24 proposed changes to the PMAs, be it energy or
25 transmission, can't help but increase the cost of

Hearing

1 power to our cooperative and to us, the consumers,
2 without any commensurate benefit.

3 This would not just be in the form of a
4 higher monthly electric bill, but would be reflected
5 in higher costs of every product and service we buy.
6 It also would increase our taxes because of increased
7 cost of public services.

8 In conclusion, I really feel that the PMAs
9 and the preference power system have been working
10 very well and are fulfilling their mission. I can't
11 help but believe that any proposed changes will add
12 costs and stress to our rural land life. Thank you.

13 MS. AZAR: Thank you. Gary Wiens?

14 MR. WIENS: Gary W-i-e-n-s.

15 My name is Gary Wiens. I'm representing
16 Montana Electric Cooperative Association, which is
17 based in Great Falls, Montana. I appreciate the
18 opportunity to talk this evening at the listening
19 session.

20 On behalf of approximately 400,000
21 Montanans served by the not-for-profit electric
22 cooperatives in our state, we want to express our
23 grave concerns about the Department of Energy's plans
24 for the federal Power Marketing Administrations.

25 It would be difficult to overstate the

Hearing

1 depth of our worry about the plan envisioned for the
2 PMAs. Last week, our statewide association Board of
3 Directors unanimously passed a resolution that states
4 the following, "We believe that the changes proposed
5 in Secretary of Energy, Steven Chu's, March 16, 2012
6 PMA memorandum are either unnecessary or premature
7 and urge the Secretary to withdraw the ill-advised
8 changes outlined in his memorandum."

9 We fear that when Secretary Chu promises
10 cost-based rates will be preserved, he is, with all
11 due respect, simply playing word games in which
12 attempts to eliminate pancaked transmission tariffs
13 to provide greater integration of alternative
14 renewable energy will result in nothing more than
15 pancaking costs into our rates.

16 "Cost causers pay" has been a principle
17 that has resulted in a successful partnership with
18 Western Area Power Administration and other federal
19 power marketing agencies. This means costs for any
20 projects must be borne solely by those who benefit.

21 Our electric cooperatives serve rural
22 Montana and the people of Rural Montana cannot afford
23 to be guinea pigs to help pay for experimental plans.
24 Many of our co-ops have less than one member per mile
25 of power line, as you heard tonight with many co-ops

Hearing

1 having to maintain power lines thousands of miles
2 long that cover multiple thousands of square miles.
3 What that means is that our co-ops' cost for power
4 delivery are extremely high compared to more urban
5 utilities. So having affordable federal power is
6 thus even more imperative to help offset these high
7 power delivery costs.

8 Moreover, the local economies in most of
9 these areas are fragile at best. You heard about the
10 high unemployment rates on, at least or a couple of
11 the tribal reservations.

12 The vast majority of Montana's low income
13 people live in these areas. These people are
14 struggling to pay their power bills. Any increase in
15 costs can prove financially devastating.

16 It has been suggested that perhaps the
17 Secretary's plans could be implemented if only a way
18 could be found to build a firewall that protects our
19 rates. However, in view of the scope, complexity and
20 high price of the programs envisioned in his
21 directive, we are, at best, extremely skeptical this
22 can be accomplished. In fact, we think that,
23 practically speaking, it is an objective that will
24 prove impossible to achieve.

25 In closing, as stated in our resolution,

Hearing

1 we urge the Secretary to withdraw this ill-conceived
2 directive. It is unnecessary, will increase costs
3 for consumers, threatens local control, violates the
4 beneficiary pays principle, and represents Department
5 of Energy overreach.

6 Thank you for the opportunity.

7 MS. AZAR: Dale Schweigert? All right.

8 Chris Christensen?

9 MR. CHRISTENSEN: C-h-r-i-s,
10 C-h-r-i-s-t-e-n-s-e-n.

11 First of all, thanks for allowing us to
12 speak here. I'm a Trustee for NorVal Electric
13 Cooperative in Glasgow, Montana, which is part of
14 Valley County. I'm also a farmer, rancher and an
15 irrigator. I make my living off the land and farming
16 is a business with small margins.

17 If the DOE wishes to force Western to
18 increase delivery cost with artificial adders as
19 proposed in Secretary Chu's March 16th memorandum,
20 this will have devastating consequences on my
21 operation and those of my neighbors.

22 A lot of you here today have talked about
23 a lot of the things that I wanted to mention and so
24 I'm going to get on a more personal note.

25 I am an irrigator, and a few years ago I

Hearing

1 made the investment to go with a pivot irrigation
2 system. The reason we did that is in our area the
3 average bushel per acre is in the low 20s, I think
4 it's 23 in Valley County and similar in those
5 counties next to us.

6 The most efficient way to irrigate is with
7 pivot irrigation because of the savings of water and
8 water being in short supply.

9 The estimated cost of our pivot for one
10 year is, for one pivot, is \$10,500. So if you take
11 the 10,500 and divide it by the 285 acres that it
12 covers, that comes out to roughly \$35 per acre and
13 that's just the electricity cost.

14 So my worry is that as we try to produce
15 food at lower costs to provide to our neighbors and
16 to the world, that any increase in cost that I think
17 that this will incur is not only going to be passed
18 on to our customers in the form of increased
19 electricity cost, but also food prices will have to
20 rise if we are going to stay in business. So there's
21 another added cost to our customers.

22 What I hope is that we are able to look at
23 this in a logical way and decide if this is really
24 the direction we want to go. Thank you.

25 MS. AZAR: Thank you. All right. That's 78

Hearing

1 the end of those who pre-registered so let me get the
2 list.

3 All right. Ronald Ohlin?

4 MR. OHLIN: My name is Ohlin, O-h-l-i-n.

5 He already has a copy of my application.

6 Well, thank you for this opportunity. The
7 Montana Electric Cooperative Association has
8 presented their case very well, and their objection
9 to the PMAs Mission and Operation. And I agree in
10 every detail of their statement.

11 Additionally, as a retired Nuclear Project
12 Engineer and a Yellowstone Valley Electric
13 Cooperative board member, I have reviewed the current
14 structure and organization of the Department of
15 Energy and present the following information to show
16 the Department's existing activity as it relates to
17 their proposed plan.

18 I just want to say before I get into the
19 text here that basically you have to look at the big
20 picture and the effects of that. If you don't get
21 the big picture right, nothing else counts. And so
22 I'm going to try to present the big picture of how
23 the Department of Energy currently operates.

24 The Department of Energy's organization
25 chart identifies four electrical energy distribution 79

Hearing

1 entities, namely the Bonneville Power Administration,
2 the Southwestern Power Administration, the
3 Southeastern Power Administration, and the
4 Northwestern Power Administration. All have the same
5 charter, and have a very successful operating history
6 as regional electrical power delivery systems in
7 their partnership with the regional Power Marketing
8 Administrations. They are dedication delivery
9 systems, not laboratories or experimental test beds.

10 The Department has currently in place an
11 Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy office. The
12 organizational chart of the EERE office includes the
13 Federal Energy Management office whose administrator
14 is Timothy D. Unruh. The proposed study could be
15 conducted under the auspices of the existing EERE's
16 Federal Energy Management.

17 The Department contains the Department of
18 Energy National Laboratories which are the Research
19 and Development arm of the Department of Energy.
20 There are currently 17 National Laboratories. Of
21 particular interest to this proposal is the ongoing
22 effort at the Idaho National Laboratory in Idaho
23 Falls. Specifically, the Critical Infrastructure
24 Test Range Complex or CITRC. Its mission is repeated
25 here from the Idaho National Laboratories

Hearing

1 description, and I am quoting, "The Critical
2 Infrastructure Test Range at INL's 890-square mile
3 site allows researchers to conduct resiliency
4 exercises and experiments from conceptual design to
5 full-scale demonstration. INL also has access to a
6 utility-scale power grid, substations, unique
7 real-time modeling and simulation systems, and
8 vendor-supplied simulation systems, and
9 vendor-supplied supervisory control and data
10 acquisition system for demonstration and deployment
11 exercises.

12 In addition, INL owns and operates an
13 unmatched communications network designed to research
14 cellular, mobile, and emerging Internet
15 communications protocols, and technology.

16 INL's wireless engineers operate both
17 fixed and mobile 3-G platforms that allow testing and
18 demonstration within a range of experimental
19 frequencies in a low-background environment."

20 The presence of this DOE structure,
21 including the capabilities identified, is already
22 capable and engaged in the Department of Energy's
23 proposed activities.

24 This would indicate that no need exists to
25 expand the PMA's mission into an R&D test bed.

Hearing

1 Thank you very much.

2 MS. AZAR: John Burgmaier?

3 MR. BURGMAIER: B-u-r-g-m-a-i-e-r.

4 Well, thank you for allowing me to speak.

5 I did not sign up because I thought during the
6 drought we had, looking for pasture for some cows, I
7 begged my neighbor for 800 acres, and after I got up
8 there, the fence was all laying down and I was busy
9 fencing.

10 But being Chairman of the Board of Sun
11 River Electric, I was going around fencing, it
12 started to make me mad. You know, we've been working
13 hard, all of my -- my grandfather and father, to get
14 electricity to the farmers through the PMAs, and cost
15 based, and all of a sudden somebody wants to start
16 using our system free of charge and jack up our
17 rates.

18 All of my stuff that I have listed on my
19 paper I'm not going to say because everybody said it
20 already before. But I'm really concerned as Chairman
21 of the Board how we can go back to my consumers next
22 March at our annual meeting and say, well, we've got
23 to raise your rates because the federal government
24 thinks you need wind.

25 And it just doesn't work for me.

82

Hearing

1 I'm really concerned about our consumers.
2 And I'm going to requote what Betty Campbell said
3 back at my farm, my pop on always told me, "son, if
4 it ain't broke, don't be fixing it."

5 And I am just afraid the government is
6 going to try fix something that ain't broke. Thank
7 you.

8 MS. AZAR: Thank you. All right. Leonard
9 --

10 MR. SIVUMAKI: Sivumaki.

11 MS. AZAR: I wasn't even going to even try
12 it.

13 MR. SIVUMAKI: S-i-v-u-m-a-k-i.

14 My name is Leonard Sivumaki. I am a
15 member and a Trustee of Sun River Electric
16 Cooperative in Fairfield, Montana.

17 Sun River Electric has a large irrigation
18 load, approximately 860 accounts, which depend on low
19 cost power.

20 Approximately 60 percent of our energy
21 comes from WAPA, and the remainder comes from Basin
22 Electric.

23 I am an irrigator, utilizing wheel line
24 type of labor intensive irrigation due to the uneven
25 terrain, as flood irrigation is not suitable.

Hearing

1 I feel the Department of Energy's
2 directive would have a stifling effect on agriculture
3 and rural families here in Montana. We rely and
4 depend on cost based, low cost hydropower from WAPA.
5 Any increase such as implied by this directive would
6 result in marginal returns at best.

7 I view this directive as a distinct effort
8 to eventually circumvent the long-standing agreement
9 for preference power between WAPA and electric
10 cooperatives. Thank you.

11 MS. AZAR: Thank you. James Mollial?

12 All right. Board member of Trego?

13 Carl Borquist? Do you want to speak? You
14 didn't put yes or no.

15 Anybody else want to speak, let's just do
16 it that way. Yes, please come on up.

17 MR. KAISERSKI: I would like to introduce
18 myself, Tom Kaiserski, K-a-i-s-e-r-s-k-i.

19 And I am with the Montana Department of
20 Commerce. Thank you for coming, Lauren. I got to
21 meet you last year at our summit in Big Sky. I
22 appreciate your attendance at that.

23 The Energy Division and Montana Department
24 of Commerce was created five years ago and our
25 office's job is to attract investment into the energy₈₄

Hearing

1 sector in Montana, to create jobs, good quality jobs,
2 which they are in the energy sector, typically paying
3 two to three times what the state average wage is.
4 And to create a tax base with that investment.

5 And so that's our mission. And I would
6 like to thank the DOE for coming and holding this
7 stakeholder session. It's obviously important to
8 rural Montana. Western is very important to Montana
9 as is BPA. And it's been made very clear it's very
10 important to our rural population.

11 And I would also like to thank Western for
12 making the Montana Alberta tie line, which is the
13 first transmission line to get built in this state in
14 a long time. It's under construction right now.
15 It'll connect Lethbridge, Alberta with Great Falls,
16 and hopefully it will get done here by the end of the
17 year.

18 And that was made possible by a Western
19 Area Power Administration loan that was part of the
20 stimulus package. So that was an important shot in
21 the arm to energy development in this state. So
22 thank you, WAPA, for that.

23 And what I would like to say then about
24 the grid in general, it's obviously -- it's very
25 important, the grid is important to our nation's

Hearing

1 economy and to our state economy.

2 And having it run efficiently is very
3 important. And Western's part in this is very
4 important as being one of four Power Marketing
5 Administrations.

6 And what I would like to see happen and
7 what I think the Secretary was trying to achieve is
8 that we could have a grid, similar to what you said,
9 Lauren, at the beginning, that could help us enhance
10 and make more economic reliable and secure delivery
11 of energy from existing sources, as well as new
12 sources.

13 And I will say that the office that I
14 operate, it promotes all energy development in this
15 state. We have significant energy resources. We
16 have the greatest coal resources in the United States
17 and we're actively trying to develop those coal
18 resources.

19 We've got -- in the western U.S. we are
20 the Number 1 wind supply in all the western United
21 States. So we've got a huge comparative advantage
22 there. We've got great hydropower.

23 What have we done in the last, in the
24 recent past? We've had significant development of
25 energy generation in the state since maybe seven,

Hearing

1 eight years ago. We developed three gas-fired power
2 plants. We built a coal-fired power plant.

3 We have an expansion to the Rainbow Dam
4 ongoing in Great Falls. We built a small hydro plant
5 near Fairfield on the irrigation system there called
6 Turnbull Hydro, and we added 400 megawatts of wind in
7 that time. And in fact, with the Madaline
8 (phonetically) going in, we're going to add another
9 229 megawatts of wind bringing us to a total of 629
10 by the end of this year.

11 What does that mean in terms -- let's talk
12 about wind, what kind of impacts does that make to
13 the rural economy? Well, these are figures that we
14 got from the developer of the two big wind farms that
15 have been built up in -- that are going to be built.
16 One has already been built, the Glacier Wind Farm,
17 210 megawatts. And then the 310 megawatt Rimrock
18 Wind Farm which will connect to the Montana-Alberta
19 tie transmission lines.

20 So that's 510 megawatts of wind, just
21 using wind as an example.

22 The impact that has on the community, I'm
23 using the figures we got from the company. They
24 estimate that those two wind farms together, 510
25 megawatts, will result in \$17 million annually in

Hearing

1 taxes and landowner payments, because the landowners
2 are getting 5 to \$8,000 per turbine to use wind as an
3 example.

4 So the point here is to talk about what
5 benefits, in this case renewable energy, can bring to
6 this state. Real benefits.

7 And so I think that -- I've heard very
8 loud and clearly today the concern that rural
9 Montanans have about their rates, and stakeholder
10 involvement is important no matter what comes out of
11 this process. It's important here for people.

12 But I could say that in light of those
13 benefits that I mentioned, I have some experience
14 with one aspect of what the memorandum talked about,
15 and that's rate pancaking.

16 The state has been involved with BPA, and,
17 in an effort to try and eliminate the rate pancake.
18 That's called the Montana Intertie, which is a
19 special transmission charge, a charge between
20 Garrison, Montana, and Townsend. This is now on
21 BPA's system.

22 But just to put this in perspective, after
23 some very thorough analysis done by Bonneville's
24 staff, the estimated increase in the network rate if
25 we were to roll that Intertie, and there were various₈₈

Hearing

1 options, but the expected increase was going to be
2 under 1 percent on the network rate.

3 So I guess the point I would like to just
4 urge is that there are benefits that come from energy
5 development, be it coal, be it natural gas, be it
6 hydro, be it wind, and that in the case of these rate
7 pancakes, for example, which are part of this
8 memorandum, the dropping of that or the rolling in
9 that network rate would really be a big inducement to
10 wind farm development, in that particular case.

11 On the order of 500 megawatts as I recall,
12 which would have similar benefits to what I just
13 mentioned, that \$17 million.

14 So I guess I would urge those to really
15 consider as part of the stakeholder process the
16 elements that could really be a good deal for rural
17 Montana. You know, there are some aspects of this
18 that I think that you could find very attractive and
19 be very beneficial to your communities.

20 And so I would urge you to focus on those
21 benefits.

22 So with that, I guess I would like to just
23 conclude and thank Western for holding and beginning
24 this, or for holding this listening session and
25 beginning this effort to examine the transmission

Hearing

1 system. Thank you.

2 MS. AZAR: Thank you. Anyone else want to
3 speak? If not, we need to say thank you. And once
4 again for those folks who have traveled far, and you
5 indicated that you were a little frustrated with the
6 three minutes, please don't forget that you can
7 submit written -- can you hear me okay?

8 THE COURT REPORTER: Barely.

9 MS. AZAR: Okay. Sorry. You can submit
10 written comments on jot@wapa.org -- or .gov. Why
11 can't I remember that since I'm in the government?

12 So please submit written comments. They
13 will be considered. And for folks that could not
14 make it, please make sure that they know about that
15 as well. We want to hear your input.

16 Thank you very much for coming and have a
17 great evening.

18 (Whereupon, the listening
19 session concluded at 8:02
20 p.m., July 18, 2012)

21 * * * * *

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