

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 13, 2014

Chair Mary Landrieu
U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
304 Dirksen Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

Ranking Member Lisa Murkowski
U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
304 Dirksen Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Landrieu and Ranking Member Murkowski;

We write in support of a request made by the United Mine Workers of America, the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, the Utility Workers Union of America, and others for the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee to hold a hearing on grid stability and reliability. The original request was made through a letter dated February 3, 2014 and signed by the Presidents of those unions. The request is supported by the utility industry.

This is a timely request, as an extremely cold winter in the Midwest and Mid-Atlantic created an unprecedented demand for electricity and pushed the region's electricity grid to its limits. On January 7, 2014, PJM, the regional transmission organization, set a winter peak demand record of 141,312 megawatts used. And, during this time, PJM fell below its generation reserve requirement, bringing the PJM footprint incredibly close to shedding load. If blackouts or brownouts had occurred, it would have endangered public health and safety across the country and cost our economy significant dollars in lost productivity.

It is important that we as policy makers understand the factors that brought the grid so close to shedding load. We respectfully request that the committee convene a hearing to explore the issues raised by the unions regarding: federal regulations; the shift in producing electricity from coal to producing electricity from natural gas, wind and solar; the low market valuation and deterrence of new entry of "steel in the ground" generation; the availability of demand response during winter; and the overall volatility in the markets.

We appreciate your consideration of this request and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



U.S. Senator Rob Portman



U.S. Senator Joe Manchin