

The CHARGE Act

Connecting Hard-to-reach Areas with Renewably Generated Energy

The energy sector of the United States is at a critical juncture, with a rapid growth of renewable energy resources and a skyrocketing public demand for clean electricity. Unfortunately, there are not nearly enough power lines to bridge the physical gap between the supply (where the renewable resources are located) and the demand (population centers). This is because the processes in place to plan and build transmission lines are fractured across many jurisdictions and shaped by incumbent utilities with parochial concerns. The result is under-planning and under-investment in the large interstate power lines that are needed to fully realize a clean energy transition and create a reliable and resilient grid—one capable of withstanding worsening storms due to climate change.

Federal policy is key to building this necessary interstate power line system, just as it was for building the interstate highway system. The United States, thus far, has relied on two-lane roads for its electricity traffic, when instead it should be building the renewable energy superhighway.

The Connecting Hard-to-reach Areas with Renewably Generated Energy (CHARGE) Act of 2023 is about finding equitable and cost-effective solutions to 21st century needs. The bill establishes a series of reforms through Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) regulations or amendments to the Federal Power Act that will allow the United States to proactively plan and build the grid that it needs across broad regions of the country.

Forward Looking Transmission Planning to Lower Prices and Improve Reliability

- Establishes formalized planning processes for long-distance power lines
- Requires transmission plans to prioritize lower prices for customers, decarbonization goals, severe weather scenarios, reliability and resiliency of the grid, and avoidance of sensitive environmental areas
- Incorporates the latest technologies to increase delivery of power over transmission lines
- Ensures that utilities follow through on public statements of clean energy goals
- Creates a reliability standard to ensure electricity can flow between different regions of the country

Data Transparency to Reduce Emissions

- Requires utilities to provide hourly operating data, including greenhouse gas emissions, in a transparent and timely manner
- Establishes an online database through the Energy Information Administration
- Removes barriers to commercial products that can alleviate congestion on the grid and provide emissions reductions

Oversight to Ensure Equity and Efficiency

- Forms an Office of Transmission within FERC to coordinate transmission activities
- Establishes an advisory committee to improve governance and stakeholder participation practices of grid operators
- Mandates transparency regarding Regional Transmission Organization and Independent System Operator voting, board meetings, and stakeholder meetings
- Requires FERC to develop rules to provide intervenor funding to help individuals or parties from disadvantaged or underrepresented communities navigate and engage in FERC proceedings