

Testimony of Secretary Perry
U.S. Department of Energy
Before the
U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, & Transportation
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Chairman Thune, Ranking Member Nelson, and Members of the Committee, it is an honor to appear before you today to discuss the President's "Building a Stronger America" plan to upgrade and modernize our nation's infrastructure and the processes we use to evaluate and approve these projects.

The fact that many of my fellow Cabinet Secretaries are here not only underscores the emphasis the President is putting on this effort, but also the far-reaching impact that infrastructure has across the federal government.

Mr. Chairman, in my capacity as Secretary of Energy and a private citizen, I have been blessed with the opportunity to travel to nearly every state in our great country.

In far too many places, I have been struck by the outdated condition of our infrastructure. There are too many instances where it is in an unacceptable state of disrepair that is damaging our Nation's competitiveness and our citizens' quality of life.

Fortunately, there is bipartisan agreement it needs to be repaired and we must build more.

When I say "infrastructure," most people think of roads, bridges, airports, seaports, waterways, and other assets generally considered "public" infrastructure.

Infrastructure also includes the vast, and predominantly privately owned and operated, network of rails, wires, and nearly 2.4 million miles of pipelines that move the energy American families – *and our economy* – rely on.

This interconnected web of critical assets carries the products that fuel our cars, heat our homes, and power our businesses. Much of this infrastructure goes unseen but the moment a light does not turn on or a home is not heated in the winter, it becomes all too real.

As the Secretary charged with supporting America's energy sector infrastructure, I am intently focused on its strength, as well as its security.

I am not a regular witness before this Committee, but I never miss an opportunity to share with members of the Senate the work we are doing to enable industry, system operators, and regulators to protect America's energy infrastructure from cyber or physical attacks. DOE is in the process of establishing a new **Office of Cybersecurity, Energy Security and Emergency Response, or CESER**, to enhance the resilience of our energy assets and better protect them from growing cyber threats.

Both the public and private sectors also need to upgrade and modernize our physical

infrastructure.

As a former governor, I enthusiastically support the President's plan for doing so. Let me tell you why.

First and foremost, the President's plan embraces America's time-honored federalist tradition.

All too often, when Washington sees a problem, it imposes top-down mandates to what are uniquely *local* challenges.

The President's plan takes a partnership approach that recognizes the local need while also building with our national interests in mind.

It is based on the common-sense notion that government that is closest to the people is best suited to understand and meet their needs.

The President's plan gives the Nation's governors the power and flexibility to prioritize infrastructure projects that will most benefit their respective states.

Equally important, the President is committed to reforming the federal permitting process to reduce the burdensome red tape that has delayed or prevented some construction projects from breaking ground.

The current permitting process is fractured and redundant – requiring projects to navigate a maze of complicated Federal regulations overseen by multiple – and often competing – Federal agencies.

Inevitably, when government fights with itself, the losers are the governed.

The President's "One Agency, One Decision" proposal will inject common sense, outcome-based reforms intended to simplify this process, reducing it to two years, while maintaining essential environmental protections.

It will also ensure that every federal agency uses uniform standards when making permitting decisions; it will set reasonable – but firm – deadlines; and it will hold these agencies accountable if those deadlines are missed.

Combined with the President's landmark tax reform law, permitting reform will give businesses the confidence, certainty and freedom they need to take transformative projects from conception to completion.

Let me give you an energy-related perspective on what this will mean.

America is in the midst of a stunning energy transformation and thanks to the President's policies we are beginning to share our energy bounty with the world, including our natural gas.

Sharing more of our energy abundance has tremendous implications here and abroad.

Geopolitically, it frees our allies from reliance on unstable or unfriendly sources, and it reduces our trade deficit.

Domestically, it will be a catalyst for further job creation and spur economic growth up, down, and beyond the supply chain.

The President's plan will help ensure that energy is delivered more reliably, affordably, and more efficiently than ever. As we innovate further and create cleaner energy – we will need the infrastructure to move it in order to benefit the environment as well.

In other words, adoption of this plan will help ensure that the benefits of our energy strategy will be felt well into the future.

Beyond energy, streamlining permitting and modernizing our infrastructure will combine to revive our Nation at a time when it is sorely needed.

Mr. Chairman, my colleagues and I urge your support for this bold plan and we look forward to working with this Committee and the Congress on its enactment.

Thank you, and I would be happy to attempt to answer your questions.