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Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

February 19, 2026

The Honorable Mike Johnson  
Speaker  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Johnson:

As you know, Americans have been increasingly stretched by the rising costs of bare necessities, which are ballooning due to corporate greed, inflation, a regressive tax code, policy rollbacks, and supply chain challenges that have been severely aggravated by President Trump's tariff regime. Perhaps in no other category do Americans feel this more on their electricity bills, which have even outpaced the persistent, elevated inflation rate.<sup>1</sup>

To alleviate this economic strain -- and in light of your leadership of the Republican Majority in the House and strong working relationships with President Trump and Leader Thune -- I urge you to forge a bipartisan, bicameral coalition and pursue legislative measures to address the crisis of energy costs.

More specifically, I strongly suggest you direct the Office of the Speaker's political will and resources towards developing new federal mechanisms to enable the federal government to regulate -- and lower --

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<sup>1</sup> Comstock, O. (2025, May 14). *U.S. electricity prices continue to steadily increase*. U.S. Energy Information Administration. <https://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.php?id=65284>

utility costs for consumers and small businesses, and the implementation of an **immediate freeze of utility rates until the fourth quarter of the 2027 fiscal year, at minimum.**

New Yorkers in my district and across the state have heavily felt the current conditions, as utility providers such as Con Edison continue to request to increase rates, with numbers as high as 13.4% effective this coming January.<sup>2</sup> The devastation of these continually rising rates resulted in President Trump publicly addressing the rate hikes in his recent meeting with then Mayor-elect Zohran Mamdani at the White House, where both leaders urged the company to not raise the rates.<sup>3</sup> But these issues are not unique to New York.

The U.S. Census Bureau estimated approximately 80 million Americans are struggling to pay their utility bills.<sup>4</sup> Residential electricity rates for Americans have risen on an average of 6.1% from August 2024 to August 2025.<sup>5</sup> In extremely low-income households, the percentage of income spent on electricity can be up to 14%.<sup>6</sup> These unprecedented, coast to coast price hikes have forced millions of families to choose between paying for their utility bills or for medicine and food. Ultimately, many families choose to either partially pay for electricity, or skip paying for it altogether.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Thyagarajan, A., Friedman, J., Baker-Branstetter, S., & Marquez, L. (2025, September 9). *Residents in at least 41 states and Washington, D.C., are facing increased electric and natural gas bills*. Center for American Progress. <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/residents-in-at-least-41-states-and-washington-d-c-are-facing-increased-electric-and-natural-gas-bills/>

<sup>3</sup> Holland, S., & Singh, K. (2025, November 21). *Trump, Mamdani say NY utility Con Edison needs to cut rates*. Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/trump-mamdani-say-ny-utility-con-edison-needs-cut-rates-2025-11-21/>

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. (2024, October 3). *Phase 4.2 Cycle 09 Household Pulse Survey: August 20-September 16*.

U.S. Government. <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2024/demo/hhp/cycle09.html>

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Energy Information Administration. (2025, November 25). *Electricity Monthly Update: With data for September 2025*

<https://www.eia.gov/electricity/monthly/update/print-version.php#:~:text=Map-Many%20parts%20of%20the%20country%20saw%20their%20highest%20levels%20of%20temperatures%20experienced%20during%20the%20month>

<sup>6</sup> Land, M., Gold, R., & Jaglom-Kurtz, W. (2025, June 20). *US governors are leading efforts to tackle the cost of electricity*. RMI. <https://rmi.org/us-governors-are-leading-efforts-to-tackle-the-cost-of-electricity/>

<sup>7</sup> Hua, C. (2025, April). *Utility bills are rising: An analysis of how utility bills are impacting American energy consumers and who determines them*. PowerLines.

[https://powerlines.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/PowerLines\\_Utility-Bills-Are-Rising\\_2025-1.pdf](https://powerlines.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/PowerLines_Utility-Bills-Are-Rising_2025-1.pdf)

While a noteworthy portion of the cost increases can be fairly attributed to inflation, the Trump Administration and Republican Majority in Congress have taken a number of actions on energy generation and affordability policies, which have exacerbated the current hardship felt by American families. For example, in September, the Trump Administration announced a bailout of \$600 million to prop up coal plants and open millions of acres of federal land for new mining and production of coal, our dirtiest and least effective energy product.<sup>8</sup> In recent days, the Environmental Protection Agency moved to abandon laws that limit the harm that soot pollution from industrial factories, including those that burn coal.<sup>9</sup>

In contrast, the Administration and Republican Majority has unjustifiably decimated a slate of major renewable energy projects and affordability programs, which, in addition to improving community health outcomes, would have provided some financial relief to consumers and small businesses. For example, the Trump Administration has withheld \$400 million for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance program (LIHEAP), cancelled major offshore wind projects that were near completion, and derailed \$7 billion in Congressionally approved funding for the Solar For All program.<sup>10</sup> Households qualify for LIHEAP if their income does not exceed either 150% of the federal poverty level, or 60% of their state's median income.<sup>11</sup> With the cancellation of this program, the National Energy Assistance Directors Association estimates the average household will experience a 7.61% cost increase to warm their homes this coming

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<sup>8</sup> Nelson, S. (2025, May 30). *How Trump Is Raising Your Energy Bills*. Evergreen Action.

<https://www.evergreenaction.com/blog/trumps-energy-price-hike-a-timeline-of-broken-promises-17>

<sup>9</sup> Daly, M. (2025, November 25). *Trump EPA moves to abandon rule that sets tough standards for deadly soot pollution*. Associated Press.

<https://apnews.com/article/epa-soot-air-pollution-trump-zeldin-deregulation-d7df5b24a159284e96b12958a840c3d8>

<sup>10</sup> Governor Kathy Hochul & Paul Tonko. (2025, November 17). *Governor Hochul and Representative Tonko call on Trump Administration to release federal heating assistance for 1.5 million New Yorkers*. New York State.

<https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-hochul-and-representative-tonko-call-trump-administration-release-federal-heating>

<sup>11</sup> National Council on Aging. (2025, October 31). *What Are the Income Qualifications for LIHEAP?*

<https://www.ncoa.org/article/what-is-the-income-limit-for-liheap/>

winter, an increase that outpaces the inflation rate.<sup>12</sup> One offshore wind project, Sparrows Point Steel in Baltimore, would have powered 700,000 homes in Maryland.<sup>13</sup> The cancellation of wind and solar projects will not only hit U.S. consumers on their bottom line, but will also cost the nation more than \$500 million in annual GDP, and jeopardize thousands of jobs across the country.<sup>14</sup>

While families are left jilted with the cancellation of these various programs, the exponential increase of AI data centers have presented additional energy-related problems. Their electricity consumption is also set to more than triple to around 580 TWh by 2028.<sup>15</sup> In comparison, the 2023 electricity usage from data centers was only 176 TWh.<sup>16</sup> This intensified demand also stresses our local power grids.<sup>17</sup>

The costs of developing, expanding and managing energy has long been distributed among ratepayers by utility providers, for the sake of public interest.<sup>18</sup> However, when the surge of data centers causes these costs to become insurmountable, it no longer makes sense to continue to abide by this practice.<sup>19</sup>

As you know, state public utilities commissions ( PUC's) control investor-owned electricity and gas operations and manage the associated rates that utility companies pass on to consumers. While the processes

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<sup>12</sup> Plautz, J. (2025, November 07). *Federal energy aid goes dark with heating bills set to rise*. POLITICO. <https://www.eenews.net/articles/federal-energy-aid-goes-dark-with-heating-bills-set-to-rise/>

<sup>13</sup> DredgeWire.(2025, November 24). *Trump's Offshore Wind Crackdown Sends Energy Bills Soaring, Kills Jobs* <https://dredgewire.com/trumps-offshore-wind-crackdown-sends-energy-bills-soaring-kills-jobs/>

<sup>14</sup> Markeson, B., & West,C. (2025, October 15). *Planned DOE Wind and Solar Cuts Could Cost the U.S. Over Half a Billion Dollars in GDP and Thousands of Jobs*. Implan. <https://blog.implan.com/wind-solar-cuts>

<sup>15</sup> Berkeley Lab. (2025, January 15). *Berkeley Lab report evaluates increase in electricity demand from data centers*. Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory. <https://newscenter.lbl.gov/2025/01/15/berkeley-lab-report-evaluates-increase-in-electricity-demand-from-data-centers/>

<sup>16</sup> Berkeley Lab. *Berkeley Lab report evaluates*.

<sup>17</sup> BloombergNEF (2025, December 1). *AI and the Power Grid: Where the Rubber Meets the Road*. Bloomberg New Energy Finance. [https://about.bnef.com/insights/clean-energy/ai-and-the-power-grid-where-the-rubber-meets-the-road/?utm\\_source=newsletter&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=newsletter\\_axiospm&stream=top](https://about.bnef.com/insights/clean-energy/ai-and-the-power-grid-where-the-rubber-meets-the-road/?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=newsletter_axiospm&stream=top)

<sup>18</sup> Oberhaus, D. (2025, June 11). *How AI Could Be Raising Your Energy Bill*. Harvard Magazine. <https://www.harvardmagazine.com/2025/07/harvard-ai-increasing-energy-costs>

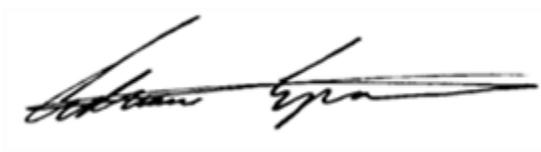
<sup>19</sup> Saul, J., Nicoletti, L., Pogkas, D., Bass, D., & Malik, N.S. (2025, September 29). *AI Data Centers Are Sending Power Bills Soaring*. Bloomberg. <https://www.bloomberg.com/graphics/2025-ai-data-centers-electricity-prices/>

differ state to state, utility companies are required to receive approval from their PUC to raise their rates.<sup>20</sup>

Given the acute nature of this cost crisis, the ways costs are exacerbated by the AI boom and the total Republican control of Congress and the Administration, I respectfully reiterate the urgency of this issue and urge you to leverage your leadership role and cultivate political will across the Republican Majority to develop new solutions and bring relief to American families. It is time to freeze the rates.

Thank you for your attention in the matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Adriano Espaillat", written over a light gray rectangular background.

Adriano Espaillat  
Member of Congress

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<sup>20</sup> Thyagarajan et al., *Residents in at least 41 states ...*