

ONE HUNDRED SIXTEENTH CONGRESS
Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE
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WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6115

Majority (202) 225-2927
Minority (202) 225-3641

September 3, 2020

The Honorable Dan R. Brouillette
Secretary
U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20585

Dear Secretary Brouillette:

We write to express our deep concern related to the Department of Energy's (DOE) resumption of the U.S. Energy and Employment Report (USEER) and delays in the Department's implementation of survey processes for the upcoming 2021 USEER.

The coronavirus disease of 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has had a devastating impact on our nation, killing more than 180,000 Americans and leaving tens of millions without a job. Since the onset of the pandemic, the U.S. has lost over 1.3 million energy sector jobs,¹ including more than 600,000 clean energy jobs.² We are therefore troubled that DOE has taken no apparent action to ensure the timely collection of survey data for the upcoming installment of the USEER, which would provide data on 2020 employment conditions.

As you know, the USEER is an annual report constructed from a survey administered to approximately 30,000 employers involved in 53 different energy technologies.³ Its origin is rooted in the first installment of DOE's Quadrennial Energy Review (QER) that was released in 2015 to advance the modernization of our nation's energy system. Among its recommendations were to "reform existing data collection systems to provide consistent and complete definitions

¹ Memorandum from Phillip Jordan, Vice President, BW Research Partnership to Clients, US Energy Employment Initial Impact from COVID-19 Economic Crisis (April 2020).

² U.S. Energy Information Administration, *Today in Energy: U.S. energy consumption in April 2020 fell to its lowest level in more than 30 years* (July 29, 2020) (www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.php?id=44556#); *U.S. clean energy sector loses 18% of jobs during pandemic -report*, Reuters (June 15, 2020).

³ The National Association of State Energy Officials and the Energy Futures Initiative, *The 2020 U.S. Energy and Employment Report* (2020).

and quantification of energy jobs across all sectors of the economy.”⁴ As a result, DOE submitted an Information Collection Request to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) that was approved via OMB Control No. 1910-5179 for the purposes of completing an energy jobs survey.⁵

DOE later released the 2016 and 2017 installments of the USEER, which provided groundbreaking insights into energy sector jobs, skills, and demographics. Subsequently, the Department completed the 2018, 2019, and 2020 installments of the report through a memorandum of understanding between Energy Futures Initiative and the National Association of State Energy Officials. In addition, DOE contracted with BW Research Partnership (BWR) to collect the report’s underlying data through the same OMB-approved methodologies used by DOE to maintain consistent year to year comparisons.⁶

Congressional authorizing and appropriating committees have taken steps to support DOE in its completion of the 2021 USEER report to ensure the retention of comparable jobs data. In December 2019, Congress appropriated \$1.7 million for DOE to produce the 2021 USEER. The final legislation also incorporated report language that emphasized the Department’s use of previously approved OMB methodologies implemented in past report installments.⁷ This means data should be collected this month.⁸

On July 14, 2020, Chairman Rush held a Subcommittee on Energy hearing to address DOE-related oversight concerns amid the COVID-19 pandemic. During the hearing, Chairman Rush inquired about DOE’s completion of timely and accurate data collection for the report’s upcoming installment. In response to his question, you suggested DOE was behind in this process but committed to completing the 2021 USEER on time.⁹

⁴ U.S. Department of Energy, *Quadrennial Energy Review: Energy Transmission, Storage, and Distribution Infrastructure* (April 2015).

⁵ Office of Management and Budget, Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, *OIRA Conclusion - OMB Control No: 1910-5179* (Sep. 21, 2016) (https://www.reginfo.gov/public/do/PRAViewICR?ref_nbr=201606-1910-001).

⁶ The National Association of State Energy Officials and the Energy Futures Initiative, *The 2020 U.S. Energy and Employment Report* (2020).

⁷ Pub. L. No. 116–94 (2020); House Committee on Appropriations, *Energy and Water Development and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill 2020*, 116th Cong. (2019) (H. Rept. 116-83); Senate Committee on Appropriations, *Energy and Water Development Appropriations Bill 2020*, 116th Cong. (2019) (S. Rept. 116-102).

⁸ Office of Management and Budget, Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, *OIRA Conclusion - OMB Control No: 1910-5179* (Sep. 21, 2016) (https://www.reginfo.gov/public/do/PRAViewICR?ref_nbr=201606-1910-001).

⁹ House Committee on Energy and Commerce, *Hearing on Oversight of DOE During the COVID-19 Pandemic*, 116th Cong. (July 14, 2020)

As a follow-up, we now request DOE provide a briefing to Committee staff on the current status of the 2021 USEER so that we can ensure that this data can be used to help restore critical energy sector jobs. We would appreciate that the Committee be briefed by the appropriate subject matter experts and that they address the following:

1. Does DOE have a timeline to complete data collection and report publication for the 2021 USEER? Please provide any details related to this timeline.
2. What actions, if any, has DOE taken to implement and complete a timeline for the 2021 USEER?
3. Will the Department issue a request for proposal (RFP) or sole-source contract to a contractor for the purposes of collecting data for the report? Please describe the criteria a qualified contractor must meet to be awarded a contract for this work.
4. At the July 14, 2020 Energy Subcommittee hearing, you stated that DOE may make additions to the USEER report's survey questions.¹⁰
 - a. Will the Department make changes to the USEER report's survey questions? If so, please indicate what additions or omissions will be made.
 - b. What steps has DOE taken in making these changes to the survey with a contractor?

We appreciate your serious attention to this matter and request that a briefing be scheduled no later than September 17, 2020. If you have any questions, please contact Tuley Wright or Jourdan Lewis of the Majority Committee staff at (202) 225-2927.

Sincerely,



Frank Pallone, Jr.
Chairman



Bobby L. Rush
Chairman
Subcommittee on Energy

¹⁰ *Id.*