



Bangor Girls Basketball team fell to Northampton 60-43 on Saturday



When It Comes To Energy Policy, Pennsylvania Needs a Reset

By Senator Lisa Boscola – 18th Senatorial District

PJM is America's largest transmission organization that coordinates the movement of wholesale electricity across 13 states, of which Pennsylvania is one. At its most recent wholesale capacity auction the cost of electricity went up 700%. Prices jumped from \$29 to \$270 per megawatt-day across the region. The size of the increase sent shockwaves across the market and should concern us all because the bottom line is we will all pay more.

The increase is due to basic economics, a supply-and-demand problem. To its credit, PJM has been warning elected officials and regulators in the states it covers about an impending crisis of capacity and reliability regarding the needed electricity to meet the grid's demands. The auction results show that PJM was not wrong.

Our electricity demands will only escalate with the growth of data centers, artificial intelligence, and electric vehicles to name a few; therefore, the capacity crunch will only get worse. The need for data centers to support the artificial intelligence market is a major reason why the demand for electricity is outpacing capacity. The electricity demands from a single data center are so great that Three Mile Island nuclear power plant is being re-opened to supply one.

Increasing electricity output is not just good for the grid, it is good for Pennsylvania's economy. Today, the energy sector employs over 273,000 workers statewide. The sector represents nearly 5% of our total state employment. Not all states are equal when it comes to the potential to generate the needed reliable, affordable, and cleaner electricity to power the grid. Pennsylvania is an energy juggernaut. We are a net power exporter, which means we already produce more than we need. We are a leading producer of natural gas and rank second only to Illinois in nuclear power production. Although shrinking, we still have coal-burning power plants.

Pennsylvania is uniquely positioned to be a leader in producing the needed electricity to meet the increasing demands of the PJM grid without breaking everyone's bank. However, to do this effectively we need to change our approach to setting energy policy. We need a sound energy policy set around a vision to develop and grow Pennsylvania's power generation. Our energy policy is currently implemented across at least three different departments (Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Department of Environmental Protection, and Department of Community and Economic Development), two agencies (Public Utilities Commission and Game Commission), and the Governor's office. The stakes are too high for our grid to continue this fragmented approach. We cannot operate as we always have and expect better results.

Merging energy issues into a single department will make our policy more cohesive. By establishing a department dedicated solely to energy, led by an appointed secretary, we would be sending a clear message about the importance of energy policy in Pennsylvania. Energy decisions must be at the forefront of our policymaking. By appointing someone visible and accountable to the Legislature and the Governor we will elevate the importance of energy policy.

Solar, wind, natural gas, coal, and nuclear each deliver unique benefits to help us meet future power demands. Energy projects like mines, pipelines, drilling operations, new power plants, and renewable projects need to be viewed together with newer technologies under a comprehensive vision that is good for the environment and the pocketbook.

A sensible energy policy is essential to securing a more prosperous future for everyone. Pennsylvania has the energy assets to be a major force on this critical issue. We need to shift from politicizing energy policy to prioritizing it. It starts with appointing a Secretary of Energy nominated by a Democratic Governor, confirmed by a Republican Senate, overseeing a new department established by a divided legislature. The time is now for Pennsylvania to step forward and elevate the conversation around energy at home and across the country.

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