April 16, 2020

The Honorable John Yarmuth
Chairman
Committee on the Budget
204-E Cannon HOB
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Steve Womack
Ranking Member
Committee on the Budget
507 Cannon HOB
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Yarmuth and Ranking Member Womack:

We write to oppose proposals in the fiscal year (FY) 2021 budget request to sell the transmission assets of the Power Marketing Administrations (PMAs) and to change the cost-based rate structure to a market-based rate structure.

The four PMAs – the Southeastern Power Administration (SEPA), Southwestern Power Administration (SWPA), Western Area Power Administration (WAPA) and Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) – “market” (sell) power generated at federal dams operated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Bureau of Reclamation and are a vital source of renewable hydroelectric power to rural electric cooperatives and public power utilities. Together, these not-for-profit utilities deliver electricity to millions of homes in rural, urban, and tribal communities at-cost.

Federal power marketed by the PMAs benefits the U.S. Treasury as appropriations are repaid with interest by the customers that receive the power. No costs are borne by taxpayers. The Department of Energy’s budget request asserts that the proposal to change cost-based rates to market-based rates is a “commonsense shift that lessens the burden on the Federal taxpayer.” This is a misguided statement because no costs are currently being burdened on taxpayers.

Improving our nation’s infrastructure is both a priority of this Administration and of Congress. However, the proposal to divest of the over 33,000 miles of transmission lines would undermine infrastructure goals and sideline investment that could otherwise be used on new projects. Privatized versions of PMA transmission assets would not provide power at-cost, which would in turn result in higher prices for those that can least afford it. Ultimately, divestiture of these assets will shift economic value from families and business in our states to investors.
These budget proposals have been rejected by Congress repeatedly because they were neither economically viable nor politically popular. We want to ensure that our federal hydropower program is protected for future generations and ask that you reject these proposals in the President’s fiscal year 2021 budget proposal. Thank you for the consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

Paul A. Gosar, D.D.S.
Member of Congress

Kurt Schrader
Member of Congress

Dan Newhouse
Member of Congress

Kelly Armstrong
Member of Congress

Jamie Herrera Beutler
Member of Congress

Andy Biggs
Member of Congress

Sanford D. Bishop Jr.
Member of Congress

Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress

Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress

Salud O. Carbajal
Member of Congress

Steve Cohen
Member of Congress

Tom Cole
Member of Congress

Jim Costa
Member of Congress

Angie Craig
Member of Congress
Rick Crawford  
Member of Congress

John Curtis  
Member of Congress

Peter DeFazio  
Member of Congress

Suzan K. DelBene  
Member of Congress

Tom Emmer  
Member of Congress

Anna A. Eshoo  
Member of Congress

Russ Fulcher  
Member of Congress

Ruben Gallego  
Member of Congress

John Garamendi  
Member of Congress

Greg Gianforte  
Member of Congress

Raúl M. Grijalva  
Member of Congress

Deb Haaland  
Member of Congress

Jim Hagedorn  
Member of Congress

Jared Huffman  
Member of Congress

Dusty Johnson  
Member of Congress

Ro Khanna  
Member of Congress
Derek Kilmer
Member of Congress

Steve King
Member of Congress

Ann Kirkpatrick
Member of Congress

Doug LaMalfa
Member of Congress

Doug Lamborn
Member of Congress

Rick Larsen
Member of Congress

Debbie Lesko
Member of Congress

Dave Loebsack
Member of Congress

Billy Long
Member of Congress

Frank Lucas
Member of Congress

Ben McAdams
Member of Congress

Jerry McNerney
Member of Congress

Tom O'Halleran
Member of Congress

Collin C. Peterson
Member of Congress

Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Member of Congress

Phil Roe, M.D.
Member of Congress
Kim Schrier, M.D.  
Member of Congress

David Schweikert  
Member of Congress

Mike Simpson  
Member of Congress

Adam Smith  
Member of Congress

Greg Stanton  
Member of Congress

Pete Stauber  
Member of Congress

Christ Stewart  
Member of Congress

Scott Tipton  
Member of Congress

Dina Titus  
Member of Congress

Greg Walden  
Member of Congress

Don Young  
Member of Congress

Cc:

The Honorable Dan Brouillette  
Secretary, U.S. Department of Energy

The Honorable Mick Mulvaney  
Secretary, Office of Management and Budget

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski  
Chairman, U.S. Senate Committee on Energy & Natural Resources

The Honorable Joe Manchin
Ranking Member, U.S. Senate Committee on Energy & Natural Resources

The Honorable Martha McSally
Chairman, Subcommittee on Water & Power, U.S. Senate Committee on Energy & Natural Resources

The Honorable Catherine Cortez Masto
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Water & Power, U.S. Senate Committee on Energy & Natural Resources

The Honorable Raul Grijalva
Chairman, U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Natural Resources

The Honorable Rob Bishop
Ranking Member, U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Natural Resources

The Honorable Alan Lowenthal
Chairman, Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources, U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Natural Resources

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chairman, U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Vice Chairman, U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Chairwoman, U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Kay Granger
Ranking Member, U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Appropriation