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U.S. Senate Select Committee on Ethics
220 Hart Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senate Select Committee on Ethics,

I am a citizen who conducts public interest research on the security of the electric grid. I wanted the Ethics Committee to be aware of this information I have developed.

The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee has taken millions of dollars in "contributions" from the electric utility industry. Perhaps it is not illegal to take money from an industry so tied to the ENR Committee's oversight responsibilities. But the optics here are horrible:

- There is no debate that the electric grid is vulnerable to a variety of threats and has, in fact, been subject to cyber-attacks by Russia and China for over a decade. Despite the threats, the Senate ENR Committee has done little to enact legislation to protect the electric grid.
- The electric utility industry is actively (and generously) paying off the Energy Committee members to do nothing. In sum, the electric utility industry spent \$24,725,200 in political contributions and spent \$122,281,276 on lobbying in 2018. That is a total of over \$147 million reasons why Congress finds it difficult to pass grid security legislation which their benefactor, the electric utility industry opposes.
- The money used to lobby and contribute to the ENR Committee ultimately comes from ratepayers paying their electric bills (who are, ironically, paying the electric utilities to lobby against their own safety). Whether this money is "corporate profit" or whether ratepayers are directly funding this lobbying and contributions to the ENR Committee is unclear. But it would certainly seem that the origin of this money should be investigated.

This is not only a potential ethics issue, but it is actually placing the safety of citizens and the national security of our country in jeopardy. My detailed report is on my website at:

<https://michaelmabee.info/money-talks-grid-security-walks/>

Let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Thank you,



Michael Mabee

Michael Mabee

Author of The Civil Defense Book™

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Money Talks, Grid Security Walks

Posted on [November 8, 2019](#) by [Michael Mabee](#)

(Or, Why Don't "They" Fix Grid Security?)

I am usually asked the same question when I do presentations. When made aware of the various threats to the electric grid—cyberattack, physical attack, geomagnetic disturbance (GMD), electromagnetic pulse (EMP), vegetation management, extreme weather, pandemic, etc.—people invariably ask: “why don't they fix it?”

Indeed, “they” have known for decades that the electric grid is vulnerable to a variety of threats. In fact, there have been decades of [Congressional hearings and federal reports](#) on the known threats to the grid.

So why don't “they” fix it? Excellent question. First of all, let's define “they.” There are a few of “them.”

1. “They” could mean Congress
2. “They” could mean the regulators
3. “They” could mean the electric utility industry

Recently I [discussed the second “they”—the regulators](#). Today I'm going to talk about the first “they”—Congress, and the third “they”—the electric utility industry. So why can't Congress fix grid security? Congress actually *can* fix grid security with legislation. They haven't. So, as it turns out, the more appropriate question is *why won't* Congress fix grid security?

The electric utility industry spent \$147 million in lobbying and political contributions in 2018.

The electric utility industry is partially self regulated. The industry has armies of lawyers and lobbyists intent on keeping things that way and keeping “burdensome” regulations at bay. (Grid security is apparently [“unduly burdensome” and “unnecessary”](#).) We know that the industry has [fought against increased cybersecurity standards](#) and has [fought against transparency in regulation](#). In fact, industry lobbying groups including the Edison Electric Institute (whose members include the [government of the People's Republic of](#)

[China](#)) have fought vigorously [against my Freedom of Information Act \(FOIA\) requests!](#)

The electric utility industry also feely throws money and influence to the two key Congressional committees that have interest in the security of the electric grid: The [U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources](#) and the [House Energy and Commerce Committee](#). So what could be the possible stumbling blocks to these two congressional bodies introducing strong legislation to protect the grid?

The U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources took the money.

In 2018, members of the U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources got **\$3,329,692** in “contributions” from the electric utility industry. Senators overall received a total of **\$3,722,517** in “contributions.” So the majority of the industry’s “contributions” went to members of this key oversight committee. (Information courtesy of the [Center for Responsive Politics](#).)

- The electric industry gave an average “contributions” of **\$144,769** per committee member.
- The electric industry gave an average “contributions” of **\$33,296** per non committee member.
- Committee Chairperson Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska) got **\$592,562**.
- Committee Ranking Member Joe Manchin (D-WVa) got **\$169,252**.

The House Energy and Commerce Committee took the money.

In 2018, members of the House Energy and Commerce Committee got **\$3,140,659** in “contributions” from the electric utility industry. Members of the House overall received a total of **\$12,049,127** in “contributions.” So one quarter of the industry’s “contributions” went to members of this key oversight committee. (Information courtesy of the [Center for Responsive Politics](#).)

- The electric industry gave an average “contributions” of **\$57,102** per committee member.
- The electric industry gave an average “contributions” of **\$7,219** per non committee member.
- Committee Chairperson Frank Pallone Jr. (D-NJ) got **\$108,599**.
- Committee Ranking Member Greg Walden (R-Ore) got **\$261,750**.

In total, the electric utility industry spent **\$24,725,200** in political contributions and spent **\$122,281,276** on lobbying in 2018. That is a total of over **\$147 million** reasons why “they” (Congress) finds it difficult to pass grid security legislation which their benefactor (the electric utility industry) opposes.

It seems money talks, grid security walks.

So, if you want to see who from these key congressional oversight committees took the money, here they are along with how much the electric utility industry “contributed” to them in 2018. Meanwhile, the electric grid remained unsecure.

You may draw your own conclusions on “why don’t **they** fix grid security.”

Footnote (message to Congress): Perhaps it is not illegal to take money from an industry so tied to your oversight responsibilities. But the optics here are horrible. There is a string of [dead grid security bills](#) over the last decade. And if a catastrophic blackout happens, they will be joined by thousands (or millions) of dead Americans.

Who Took The Money in 2018?

[Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources:](#)

Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn)	\$136,900
John A Barrasso (R-Wyo)	\$317,400
Maria Cantwell (D-Wash)	\$80,155
Shelley Moore Capito (R-WVa)	\$129,150

Bill Cassidy (R-La)	\$48,600
Steven Daines (R-Mont)	\$90,700
Tammy Duckworth (D-III)	\$43,351
Jeff Flake (R-Ariz)	\$111,450
Cory Gardner (R-Colo)	\$163,400
Martin Heinrich (D-NM)	\$207,470
Mazie Hirono (D-Hawaii)	\$22,595
John Hoeven (R-ND)	\$133,455
Angus King (I-Maine)	\$36,600
Mike Lee (R-Utah)	\$66,900
Joe Manchin (D-WVa)	\$169,252
Catherine Cortez Masto (D-Nev)	\$31,209
Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska)	\$592,562
Rob Portman (R-Ohio)	\$375,000
James E Risch (R-Idaho)	\$61,500
Bernie Sanders (I-Vt)	\$4,065
Tina Smith (D-Minn)	\$47,684
Debbie Stabenow (D-Mich)	\$206,063
Ron Wyden (D-Ore)	\$254,231

[House Energy and Commerce Committee:](#)

Joe Barton (R-Texas)	\$45,150
Gus Bilirakis (R-Fla)	\$49,000
Marsha Blackburn (R-Tenn)	\$83,998
Susan Brooks (R-Ind)	\$32,458
Larry Bucshon (R-Ind)	\$30,500
Michael Burgess (R-Texas)	\$12,250
G K Butterfield (D-NC)	\$21,000
Tony Cardenas (D-Calif)	\$43,505
Buddy Carter (R-Ga)	\$36,250
Kathy Castor (D-Fla)	\$7,525
Yvette D Clarke (D-NY)	\$30,753
Chris Collins (R-NY)	\$32,500
Ryan Costello (R-Pa)	\$29,500
Kevin Cramer (R-ND)	\$43,115
Diana DeGette (D-Colo)	\$10,000
Debbie Dingell (D-Mich)	\$60,500
Mike Doyle (D-Pa)	\$73,000
Eliot L Engel (D-NY)	\$25,000
Anna Eshoo (D-Calif)	\$9,500
Bill Flores (R-Texas)	\$40,000

Gene Green (D-Texas)	\$10,500
Morgan Griffith (R-Va)	\$72,750
Brett Guthrie (R-Ky)	\$23,000
Gregg Harper (R-Miss)	\$22,000
Richard Hudson (R-NC)	\$50,500
Bill Johnson (R-Ohio)	\$103,000
Joe Kennedy III (D-Mass)	\$28,563
Adam Kinzinger (R-Ill)	\$74,400
Leonard Lance (R-NJ)	\$49,250
Robert E Latta (R-Ohio)	\$95,700
David Loebsack (D-Iowa)	\$38,204
Billy Long (R-Mo)	\$35,750
Ben Ray Lujan (D-NM)	\$75,450
Doris O Matsui (D-Calif)	\$30,500
David McKinley (R-WVa)	\$74,950
Jerry McNerney (D-Calif)	\$62,053
Markwayne Mullin (R-Okla)	\$63,500
Tim Murphy (R-Pa)	\$0
Pete Olson (R-Texas)	\$85,750
Frank Pallone Jr. (D-NJ)	\$108,599

Scott Peters (D-Calif)	\$76,100
Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-Wash)	\$109,870
Raul Ruiz (D-Calif)	\$37,853
Bobby L Rush (D-III)	\$36,500
John Sarbanes (D-Md)	\$2,700
Steve Scalise (R-La)	\$119,295
Jan Schakowsky (D-III)	\$1,505
Kurt Schrader (D-Ore)	\$55,097
John M Shimkus (R-III)	\$173,700
Paul Tonko (D-NY)	\$70,600
Fred Upton (R-Mich)	\$192,615
Tim Walberg (R-Mich)	\$101,900
Greg Walden (R-Ore)	\$261,750
Mimi Walters (R-Calif)	\$65,250
Peter Welch (D-Vt)	\$16,001

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