



August 7, 2026

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nikki Budzinski
Co-Chair, Gas and Utilities Working Group
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mike Levin
Co-Chair, Gas and Utilities Working Group
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Leader Jeffries and Representatives Budzinski and Levin;

Public Citizen¹ thanks you for your leadership in convening the Democratic Caucus to identify and prioritize what matters most to Americans right now: the cost of living and affordability crisis. The Trump administration has failed to curb the costs of working families and taken actions that increase day-to-day spending.

We believe that addressing the affordability crisis can and should align with finding solutions for the climate crisis, providing a reliable and resilient clean energy future for everyone. It is more critical than ever to emphasize the climate crisis in the affordability narrative² and reject calls to silence or quiet³ criticism of the ongoing climate catastrophe. Climate is already increasing daily costs in the form of rising insurance premiums, food prices,⁴ health impacts from summer-ruining heat waves,⁵ and economic disruptions from record-breaking droughts, historically destructive storms, and dystopian wildfires.⁶

Not only do 74 percent of Americans want Congress to take action on climate,⁷ they overwhelmingly⁸ trust Democrats more than Republicans to address the issue. Because Democratic plans to expand clean energy, hold Big Oil accountable and meaningfully address America's energy affordability crisis will deliver real cost relief, articulating this connection⁹ is a way for Democrats to gain trust on the cost of living issue. For example, the Yale Program on

¹ Public Citizen is a nonprofit consumer advocacy group with over one million members dedicated to defending democracy, challenging corporate power, and ensuring the government serves the people—not big corporations. Our Climate and Energy Programs challenge fossil fuel interests and advocate for cheap and clean renewable energy solutions needed to remedy the climate crisis.

² Climate and Community Institute (CCI), Stop Greed, Build Green: A Working Class Climate Agenda, CCI (15 April 2026), <https://stopgreedbuildgreen.climateandcommunity.org/posts/agenda>

³ Yoder, Kate, 'Climate hushing' has swept the Democratic Party. New polling suggests it's a mistake, *Grist* (27 July 2026), https://grist.org/politics/climate-hushing-democrats-polling-primaries-voters/?utm_source=ig&utm_medium=social&utm_content=link_in_bio

⁴ Kotz, Maximilian et al., Climate extremes, food price spikes, and their wider societal risks, 2025 *Environ. Res. Lett.* IOP Publishing, (21 July 2025) <https://iopscience.iop.org/article/10.1088/1748-9326/ade45f#erlade45ff1>

⁵ Henson, Bob and Masters, Jeff. Eastern U.S. broils after heat wave kills over 1,300 in Europe, (29 June 2026), Yale Climate Connections, <https://yaleclimateconnections.org/2026/06/eastern-u-s-to-broil-after-heat-wave-kills-over-1300-in-europe/>

⁶ Regunberg, Aaron and Henn, Jamie. Jamie Henn, Climate Action Can Win Majorities, *Jacobin* (19 May 2026), <https://jacobin.com/2026/05/climate-change-politics-democrats-affordability>

⁷ The 89 Percent Project (2026), <https://89percent.org/>

⁸ Fossil Free Media and Data for Progress, MEMO: Cheap, Clean and Fair: The Winning Climate Message for 2026, (20 November 2025), https://makepolluterspay.net/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/FEM_PC_DEP-piece-7.pdf

⁹ Ibid.

Climate Change Communication (YPCCC) recently released¹⁰ its annual 2026 “Climate Change in the American Mind” report, which found that the majority of registered voters think global warming is causing the price they pay for goods and services to increase, with 66 percent saying this is true of their home utility bills, 61 percent for groceries, and 51 percent for home insurance. Similarly, comparing the climate policy solutions of Democrats against the Big Oil harms caused by the Trump administration¹¹ reinforces Democratic policies that help, rather than hinder, American livelihoods.

In response to the feedback the leaders of the gas and utility working group requested, below are the top priorities Public Citizen believes the working group and Democratic leadership should consider as you build out an affordability agenda for the Caucus:

1. Address rising energy, gas, and insurance bills as a result of Trump’s attacks on climate policies.

- Reverse and strengthen clean energy tax credits while also repealing expanded and decades-old fossil fuel subsidies that warp the true market costs for oil, gas, and coal. Additionally, establish an oil and natural gas windfall profits tax¹² until the massive profits by oil and gas¹³ have leveled off with the increased gas and energy costs. The revenue generated from these profits could be used to finance household utility rate reductions and clean energy or energy efficiency grants;
- Reinforce through tax credits, rebates, and state-funded programs that electric vehicle, electric transit, and micro-mobility policies are reliable, reduce consumer bills, and provide consumer choice for alternative transportation options. The Trump administration has scapegoated these policies and lied about them increasing consumer costs. In reality, millions of Americans are looking for cheaper, more reliable options that avoid the volatile price of gasoline;
- Investigate energy price gouging and illegal anti-competitive behavior¹⁴ by oil and gas companies and utilities, and take steps to enforce and hold companies accountable for profiteering. This could be done by reforming natural gas markets,¹⁵ ensuring that Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) exports do not raise utility bills for working Americans,¹⁶ subjecting oil exports to short supply regulations under the Department of Commerce,¹⁷ directing the Commodity Futures Trading Commission to impose stronger margin

¹⁰ Leiserowitz, Anthony et al., Climate Change in the American Mind: Politics & Policy, Spring 2026, Yale Program on Climate Change Communication, (9 June 2026),

<https://climatecommunication.yale.edu/publications/climate-change-in-the-american-mind-politics-policy-spring-2026/>

¹¹ Zibel, Alan and Ross, Lukas, One Bountiful Oil Billionaire Bonanza: Big Oil Wins in GOP Tax and Budget Bill, Public Citizen, (23 May 2025), <https://www.citizen.org/article/one-bountiful-oil-billionaire-bonanza-big-oil-wins-in-gop-tax-and-budget-bill/>

¹² U.S. Senate Public Works Committee, As Trump’s War Surges Gas Prices, Whitehouse and Khanna Reintroduce Big Oil Profits Clawback to Provide Relief at the Pump, U.S. Senate Public Works Committee, (17 March 2026), <https://www.epw.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2026/3/as-trump-s-war-surges-gas-prices-whitehouse-and-khanna-reintroduce-big-oil-profits-clawback-to-provide-relief-at-the-pump>

¹³ Simon, Julia, Oil companies are making billions. In the U.S., calls to tax their windfall are growing, National Public Radio, (16 July 2026), <https://www.npr.org/2026/07/16/nx-s1-5845818/oil-prices-windfall-tax-iran-war>

¹⁴ Schupack, Elyse, Comments in Response to Chevron/Hess and Sheffield (Pioneer) Petitions to Overturn FTC Orders, Public Citizen (12 May 2025), <https://www.citizen.org/article/ftc-must-reject-chevron-hess-and-sheffield-pioneer-petitions-following-findings-of-oil-executive-collusion-with-opec>

¹⁵ Slocum, Tyson, Proposals to Improve Natural Gas Price Transparency, Public Citizen (17 February 2026), <https://www.citizen.org/article/proposals-improve-natural-gas-price-transparency/>

¹⁶ Slocum, Tyson, Record Setting LNG Exports Send Energy Costs Spiraling for consumers, Public Citizen (1 April 2026), <https://www.citizen.org/news/record-setting-lng-exports-send-energy-costs-spiraling-for-consumers/>

¹⁷ Public Law 114–113, Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2016, 114th Congress, (18 December 2015), <https://www.congress.gov/114/plaws/publ113/PLAW-114publ113.pdf>

requirements that reduce excessive speculation in energy markets,¹⁸ and requiring investigations by the Federal Trade Commission under 15 U.S.C. 46(a) and (b) for potential anti-competitive practices that result in higher prices for American families;

- Create strong guardrails for rapidly expanding data centers, especially those relying on fossil energy. Public Citizen has published state and federal solutions¹⁹ to address the data center build out and is developing federal principles to outline needed policies for legislation that would address both effective AI governance and guardrails for data center development;
- Ban or temporarily prohibit utility shutoffs due to nonpayment. No individual or family should fear utility shutoff during increasingly more frequent and extreme weather, or be forced to choose between paying for a bill or a prescription. Additional policies to provide immediate and temporary relief for low- and moderate- income households' energy bills should be considered, including requiring the Energy Information Administration or the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to collect and report data on a utility-specific basis of the number of households 60 days or more behind payment, and the number of disconnections;
- Lower utilities' rate of return. This can be done through FERC initiating immediate 206 proceedings to review electric transmission cost of capital and reduce transmission owners' return on equity. Limit utilities' ability to recover trade association dues and lobbying expenses from ratepayers.²⁰ Additionally, reform wholesale power markets²¹ to subject market-based rate sellers to annual audits and refunds of unjust and unreasonable profit margins. If working families are forced to budget and limit expenses because of high energy bills, investors should too;
- Fund FERC intervenors to boost public participation. Authorizing the FERC Office of Public Participation to provide intervenor funding for qualifying public interest participants can help underrepresented individuals with limited resources navigate and take part in FERC proceedings.²² We appreciate this policy being included in Congressman Levin's Energy Bills Relief Act, and request that you continue to prioritize this issue;²³ and,
- Curb skyrocketing insurance rates²⁴ by protecting insurance consumers, reforming federal disaster response, and restoring and expanding crucial climate and catastrophe data.²⁵ Climate and weather disasters cost the U.S. \$115 billion²⁶ in 2025. Proactive investments in community and property-level resilience can lower premiums by reducing losses. Investments in public climate and catastrophe data and modeling can help communities

¹⁸ Slocum, Tyson, Letter to CFTC Chairman Rostin Behnam, Public Citizen (24 March 2022),

<https://www.citizen.org/wp-content/uploads/CFTCBehnam.docx>

¹⁹ Noel, Deanna and Pazik, Meghan, Reining in Big Tech: Policy Solutions to Address the Data Center Buildout, Public Citizen (3 December 2025), <https://www.citizen.org/article/reining-in-big-tech-policy-solutions-to-address-the-data-center-buildout/>

²⁰ Slocum, Tyson and Curley, Rachel, Comments on Rate Recovery for Trade Association Dues, Public Citizen, (22 February 2022),

<https://www.citizen.org/article/comments-on-rate-recovery-for-trade-association-dues/>

²¹ Slocum, Tyson, Modernizing Electricity Market Design, Public Citizen, (4 February 2022),

<https://www.citizen.org/article/modernizing-electricity-market-design/>

²² Slocum, Tyson, Presentation To Energy Justice Advocates On Intervenor Funding, (14 June 2023),

<https://www.citizen.org/article/presentation-to-energy-justice-advocates-on-intervenor-funding/>

²³ Congressman Mike Levin, Energy Bills Relief Act Section by Section, Sustainable Energy and Environment Coalition (18 March 2026),

<https://seec.house.gov/sites/evo-subsites/seec.house.gov/files/evo-media-document/26.02.18-energy-bills-relief-act-sec-by-sec.pdf>

²⁴ Environmental Defense Fund, 4 ways climate change is impacting home insurance, putting us at risk Environmental Defense Fund, (10 March 2026), <https://www.edf.org/how-climate-change-impacting-home-insurance>

²⁵ Qin, Amy, The Trump administration is deleting government data. From infant deaths to hunger, here are five ways it's hurting American, The Guardian (7 May 2026), <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/ng-interactive/2026/may/07/trump-administration-deleting-data>

²⁶ Shah, Simone, Climate and Weather Disasters Cost the U.S. \$115 Billion in 2025, Times (8 January 2026), <https://time.com/7344568/2025-billion-dollar-climate-disasters/>

prepare.²⁷ Though insurance is primarily regulated at the state level, there is a growing need for congressional intervention, including establishing a minimum loss ratio for property insurers,²⁸ prohibiting the use of credit-based scoring²⁹ in insurer underwriting and pricing decisions, and requiring insurers to invest in climate resilience.³⁰ Public Citizen supports many of the solutions to address insurance premiums in Senator Smith's report,³¹ such as funding for extreme weather-related and climate data programs and funding for new climate-resilient housing programs.

2. Highlight the corruption of Big Oil and the Trump administration.

- Oversight will be critical to hold the Trump administration and its oil and gas donors accountable. This administration's corrupt actions have favored oil and gas companies over lessening the burden of everyday Americans. Public Citizen has built out a living oversight agenda document for the new Congress, including key steps for oversight of the Trump administration. Some of those topics include: Trump's weakening of the EPA, repeal of the endangerment finding, attacks on clean energy, One Big Beautiful Bill accountability, and more;
- The Trump administration is staffed top-to-bottom³² with climate deniers and oil and gas executives, making the corruption of the United States' fossil fuel addiction explicit for all to see. Congress should consider impeachment and removal of Trump officials for key political positions, and replacement with officials that will commit to transparent, democratic governance; and,
- Reinforce the independent nature of agencies to prevent future administrations from removing independent positions meant to hold the executive branch accountable and from politicizing independent agencies.

Thank you for considering these ideas and policy considerations when moving forward on the Democratic affordability agenda. Additionally, for more policy ideas on these subjects, see Public Citizen's Sustainable Energy and Environment Coalition Institute's response³³ to the Thriving Economy Project RFI. If you would like to meet and discuss these ideas further or have questions, please reach out to Meghan Pazik, senior policy advocate with Public Citizen's Climate Program (mpazik@citizen.org).

Sincerely,

Public Citizen's Climate and Energy Program

²⁷ Condon, Madison, Stand Up a National Climate Service, Roosevelt Institute (30 July 2026), <https://rooseveltinstitute.org/publications/stand-up-a-national-climate-service/>

²⁸ Shearer, Brian, How to Lower the Insurance "Tax" By \$150 Billion, Vanderbilt University, (April 2026) <https://cdn.vanderbilt.edu/vu-URL/wp-content/uploads/sites/412/2026/04/29171033/How-to-Lower-the-Insurance-Tax-By-150-Billion.pdf>

²⁹ Brown, Claire and Rojanaskul, Mira, The Hidden Factor Behind Your Home Insurance Cost: Your Credit History, The New York Times, (9 March 2026), https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2026/03/09/climate/home-insurance-credit-scores.html?eafs_enabled=false

³⁰ Fabian, Carly, Schupack, Elyse, et al, Resilient States Start with Resilient Homes, (27 July 2026), <https://www.citizen.org/article/resilient-states-start-with-resilient-homes/>

³¹ Smith, Tina, Bold Solutions to the Home Insurance Crisis, U.S. Senate Banking Committee's Subcommittee on Housing, Transportation, and Community Development (July 2026), <https://ciosensus.app.box.com/s/x0b9rb7jfedxaz1b0xzfdnsyk6d7hery>

³² Zibel, Alan, and Rosenthal, Toni, Trump's Polluter Playground: Fossil Fuel Insiders & Ideologues Prop Up Dirty Energy & Derail Clean Power, Public Citizen and Revolving Door Project (6 October 2025), <https://www.citizen.org/article/trumps-polluter-playground/>

³³ Public Citizen, SEEC RFI Response to the Thriving Economy Project, Public Citizen, <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1rTnsqU9pG-9-Xia3ffmt2NawCVh-HmIJZMHDvY5SXus/edit?tab=t.0>