



July 23, 2026

The Honorable Mike Lee
Chairman
Energy and Natural Resources Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Martin Heinrich
Ranking Member
Energy and Natural Resources Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Lee and Ranking Member Heinrich:

On behalf of the American Public Power Association (APPA) and the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), and the Edison Electric Institute (EEI), we write to express our support for the Hydropower Licensing Affordability Act (S. 5048). Collectively, our members provide electric service to hundreds of millions of American customers across all regions of the country, including urban, suburban, and rural communities. Ensuring the continued affordability and reliability of electricity is central to our shared mission.

APPA is the voice of not-for-profit, community-owned utilities that power approximately 2,000 towns and cities nationwide. APPA represents public power before the federal government to protect the interests of the more than 55 million people that public power utilities serve across 49 states and five territories.

NRECA is the national trade association representing nearly 900 not-for-profit electric cooperatives which are owned and operated by the people they serve. Electric cooperatives power the lives of approximately 42 million Americans across 56 percent of the nation's landscape.

EEI is the association that represents all U.S. investor-owned electric companies. EEI member companies provide electricity for nearly 250 million Americans and operate in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The electric power industry as a whole supports more than seven million jobs in communities across the United States. This year, EEI's member companies are projected to invest more than \$200 billion to help meet the nation's growing demands for reliable electricity, while also keeping customer bills as low as possible.

Hydropower remains a critical component of the nation's electric generation mix, providing reliable, dispatchable, and renewable energy. However, the federal hydropower licensing and relicensing process has become increasingly costly, complex, and time-consuming. These costs are not absorbed in isolation; rather, they are ultimately borne by the customers our members serve. Lengthy licensing timelines, expansive study requirements, and broadly scoped mandatory conditions can significantly

increase project costs, placing upward pressure on retail electricity rates for families, businesses, and public institutions.

The Hydropower Licensing Affordability Act takes a measured and targeted approach to addressing these challenges. Specifically, the legislation clarifies that mandatory conditions issued pursuant to Sections 4(e) and 18 of the Federal Power Act must be limited to those necessary to mitigate the direct adverse effects of a project on federal reservations and fish populations, respectively. By aligning these requirements more closely with actual project impacts, the bill would restore the appropriate scope of agency authority while preserving important environmental protections.

This clarification is expected to yield meaningful improvements in both cost and process efficiency. By ensuring that conditions are directly related to project effects, the legislation would reduce the likelihood of unnecessarily broad or duplicative requirements that drive up costs without commensurate benefits. In turn, this would lower overall project expenses and reduce the financial burden passed through to electricity customers. Additionally, narrowing the scope of mandatory conditions would help streamline the licensing process, reduce disputes, and shorten review timelines—providing greater regulatory certainty for utilities undertaking long-term infrastructure investments.

For the diverse utilities represented by our organizations, maintaining affordable electricity rates is a fundamental responsibility. Modernizing the hydropower licensing process to ensure that requirements are closely tied to project impacts represents a practical and balanced step toward achieving that goal, while continuing to support environmental stewardship.

We appreciate your leadership on this important issue and respectfully urge Congress to advance the Hydropower Licensing Affordability Act. We look forward to working with you to support policies that sustain hydropower as a reliable and cost-effective resource for the nation's electricity customers.

Sincerely,



Scott Corwin
President and Chief Executive Officer
American Public Power Association



Jim Matheson
Chief Executive Officer
National Rural Electric Cooperative Association



Drew Maloney
President and Chief Executive Officer
Edison Electric Institute

CC: The Honorable Steve Daines
The Honorable Jim Risch
The Honorable Lisa Murkowski