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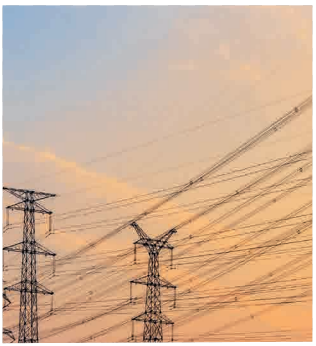
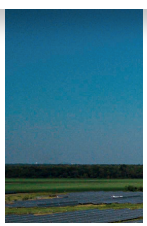


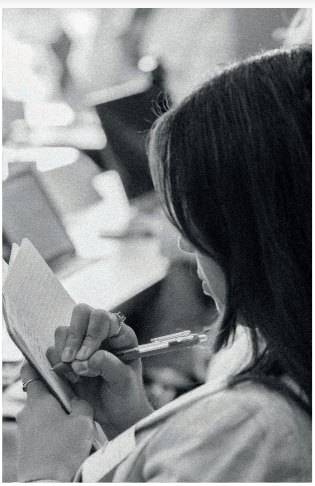
THE POWERING LOUISIANA FORUM

PERSPECTIVES ON HOW LOUISIANA CAN LEAD IN A NEW ENERGY ERA

AUGUST 2026





Executive Summary

Louisiana faces a surge of electricity demand that is unprecedented in modern times. A new wave of data centers and industrial manufacturers is calling for gigawatts of additional capacity. Industry wants access to power on timelines faster than the planning, certification, and interconnection processes the state relies on were built to move. Surging demand carries both an opportunity and a risk. If managed well, it could bring capital investment, jobs, income growth, and government revenue, and expand Louisiana's role as a domestic and global energy leader. Or, it could strain the grid, raise costs for residents, and sideline host communities. In April 2026, the Powering Louisiana Forum convened utilities, grid operators, renewable and emerging-technology developers, industrial energy buyers, state agencies, academics, legal and policy experts, and ratepayer and community advocates to work through how the state can capture the gains of new load growth while minimizing the risks.

Despite a wide range of priorities, forum participants converged on several points: "Speed to power" has become a deciding factor in where industrial investment lands, standing alongside cost, reliability, and workforce quality. Serving that demand reliably calls for an all-of-the-above resource mix. Transmission is now economic infrastructure and access to the grid is a primary site-selection factor, not a step that follows the decision to build. Participants shared concerns for affordability as residential rates climb faster than inflation. They also recognized that local opposition could advance or stall a project, which makes early trust a prerequisite for siting. Serving today's demand will require a new level of coordination among parties that answer to different authorities and prioritize different outcomes. The body of this paper works through these questions within the following seven challenge areas.

1. ***Build generation at scale and speed*** — New demand requires gigawatts of capacity on compressed timelines. The state has moved to shorten permitting, certification, and interconnection processes, but questions remain about the risks of exempting projects from competitive bidding and public input requirements.
2. ***Embrace a mix of technologies*** — An all-of-the-above mix is framed as both a necessity and a competitive advantage, yet Louisiana draws more than 75% of its power from natural gas. That concentration but exposes ratepayers to fuel-price volatility as demand and exports rise. A diverse mix of wind, solar, nuclear, battery storage, and other emerging technologies, paired with gas for peak demand, could mitigate fuel-price risk.
3. ***Treat the grid as strategic infrastructure*** — Transmission is reframed as economic infrastructure that shapes where industry locates, rather than an afterthought to generation. The May 2025 load shed across Southeast Louisiana underscored the region's structural vulnerability as a load pocket. Disagreement over cost allocation is a barrier to progress.
4. ***Protect affordability as deployment scales*** — Rising rates and billions in proposed capital spending raise the question of who pays. The central issue is whether large

load customers will cover the full cost of the assets built to serve them, or whether those costs spread to existing ratepayers.

5. ***Earn local buy-in through transparent engagement*** — Local trust is an emerging precondition for siting. Trust is built through early engagement and benefit-sharing tools like CBAs and PILOTs. The capacity to permit projects and negotiate terms varies widely across parishes, with rural parishes lacking resources for ideal engagement.
6. ***Improve coordination among parties*** — Serving new load requires utilities, regulators, grid operators, customers, and host parishes to align. Each has their own priorities and answers to a different authority. Cost allocation and durable, institutionalized coordination are recurring constraints.
7. ***Examine new approaches to regulation and planning*** — Institutions and frameworks built in an era of slower, more distributed growth now face gigawatt-scale projects and an evolving resource mix. Participants centered new procurement models that would enable large loads to contract power more directly. Louisiana's constitutionally enshrined regulatory structure limits.

These challenges point in a consistent direction. Adding data centers and other large industrial projects to Louisiana's grid is already a demanding technical undertaking. Doing so without burdening ratepayers, while improving reliability, and at the speed of global competition, highlights the thorny and contentious nature of the challenge. It calls for new forms of collaboration among the many parties involved, new approaches to planning and regulation suited to the pace and scale of current demand, and the incorporation of new technologies across the grid. Identifying the best possible approach is a question that could not be settled at the forum, but its salience grows as Louisiana residents, elected officials, and regulators become more attuned to issues of electricity affordability and reliability and their relationship to the state's economic development strategy. Ideally, the conversations that began at Powering Louisiana will continue at future convenings and draw an even wider set of participants.

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Louisiana's Energy Inflection Point

Louisiana faces a surge of electricity demand that brings with it an opportunity to expand its role as a domestic and global energy leader. State leaders can secure substantial capital investments, job creation, income growth, and government revenues if they are able to facilitate access to large scale electricity generation on a short timeline. But the flood of new activity could also strain Louisiana's grid, raise costs for residents, and sideline communities if it is not managed effectively. The rapid demand growth in the electricity sector is unprecedented in modern times. Navigating these uncharted waters will require creative solutions, new technologies, and increased coordination.

In April, the Powering Louisiana Forum sought to improve coordination by convening representatives from a diverse set of backgrounds: utilities and grid operators, renewable and emerging-technology developers, industrial energy buyers, state agencies, economic development organizations, academics, legal and policy experts, and community advocates. For two days, these stakeholders exchanged their knowledge and ideas on the challenges and questions swirling around Louisiana's electricity system: How can we leverage our energy system to support economic development? Will new large load demands exacerbate the grid's vulnerabilities or enable crucial investments in reliability? What technologies are ideal to meet the need for new power, fast? How can we protect ratepayers from rising utility bills and help local communities navigate a transforming landscape? How can Louisiana remain competitive in the global energy market?

The forum surfaced many points of consensus, some points of contention, a few unanswered questions, and an emerging set of imperatives Louisiana should act on to turn rising demand into lasting gains. This paper outlines the most pressing challenges of the moment and summarizes perspectives and solutions offered by Powering Louisiana's participants.[1] It is intended for regulators, legislators, utility leaders, developers, and community advocates who are working through these questions, and for readers seeking a clearer picture of where the state stands. Ideally these pages will offer a shared reference point for the crucial planning, policy, and investment decisions ahead.

Challenges for Louisiana's Energy Future

1. Build Generation Assets at Scale and Speed

Challenge Context

Louisiana is no stranger to large, energy-intensive industry, hosting some of the world's largest companies drawn by plentiful natural resources, established energy infrastructure,

[1] Note: the views in this paper are a summary of ideas expressed by forum participants. They are not the opinions of the author. Some viewpoints may be in conflict with others due to differing priorities and perspectives of forum participants.

a world-class port system, and a capable workforce. A new wave of data centers and industrial manufacturers now calls for gigawatts of additional capacity. The Meta data center under construction in Richland Parish will eventually require more than 10 GW, over a third of Louisiana's 29.3 GW generating fleet.[2] Counted alongside proposed data centers from Amazon and Hut 8, Mitsubishi's integrated steel facility, developing clean hydrogen and ammonia projects, and a broader move toward industrial electrification, the ability to provide power at scale has become a precondition for economic growth. Speed matters as much as scale. Industrial customers routinely arrive at state economic development offices needing power within 18 to 24 months, a timeline in tension with utility integrated resource planning, Louisiana Public Service Commission (LPSC) certification, and grid interconnection, each of which can run for years. Texas, Georgia, and other Southern states pursue the same customers, and projects that cannot get a clear answer on power go where they can find certainty.

Louisiana has moved to shorten those timelines. The state reorganized the former Department of Natural Resources into the new Department of Conservation and Energy, creating a one-stop-shop permitting framework for large energy projects. In late 2025, Governor Landry's Lightning Speed executive order directed that agency, the LPSC, and Louisiana Economic Development to coordinate on priority projects, and the LPSC followed with a directive to speed reviews of utility generation tied to large loads. At the grid level, the Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO) introduced a temporary Expedited Resource Addition Study (ERAS) process for qualifying facilities. Industry participants have welcomed these steps, but accelerated review has raised questions about competitive procurement, rate transparency, and public input, the protections built to safeguard ratepayers and communities. Federal regulators rejected MISO's first ERAS proposal in 2025 as failing the "just and reasonable" standard before approving a narrower version that ratepayer advocates and renewables developers continue to contest.

Forum Perspectives

Industrial customers and large-load buyers described power access as the first conversation they have with economic development offices, ahead of workforce, logistics, or incentives. One manufacturer cited a willingness to commit to capacity and timing as the reason Louisiana was chosen over other states. Demand, they stressed, is not slowing as automation and electrification compound data center growth.

Utility representatives called the moment "reactionary," with demand outpacing planning built for a slower era. Their near-term response is a buildout of natural gas, a familiar technology with a supply chain matched to data center load profiles. Reporting strong customer interest in wind and solar, they have begun shifting from integrated resource planning toward tech-specific targeted procurement to move faster on customer preferences.

Renewables developers pointed to solar's shorter build time relative to supply-constrained gas turbines. Their binding constraint is connection, not construction: queue

[2] According to EIA's most recent Form-860M (March 2026), Louisiana is home to 29.3 GW of total generating capacity.

timelines of roughly two years and uncertain network-upgrade costs lead some projects to withdraw before reaching commercial operation. Expedited pathways have not reached renewables evenly, they noted, with ERAS so far serving mostly gas.

Ratepayer and consumer advocates warned against speed without guardrails. Competitive bidding, public notice, and transparency protect ratepayers and should not be suspended to meet large-load timelines. They cautioned that near-term additions weighted toward gas concentrate fuel-price risk on ratepayers, and that building to the full scale of data center requests risks stranded assets if that demand does not materialize.

Local community advocates treated public engagement as a contributor to speed rather than an obstacle. Many parishes lack the ordinances or staff to evaluate projects, and without clear local rules even utility-scale solar can stall. Speed gained by skipping engagement, they warned, often returns later as delay when communities push back.

2. Embrace a Mix of Technologies to Meet Generation Needs

Challenge Context

Throughout the forum, an all-of-the-above mix was framed as both a necessity and a competitive advantage, with firm natural gas, nuclear, solar, wind, storage, and emerging options like geothermal and clean hydrogen each serving distinct roles. Louisiana's actual mix is far narrower. Natural gas fuels more than 75% of the state's electricity, against a national average near 43%; nuclear supplies about 15%, and solar and hydroelectric together account for less than 3%.[3] The reliance is easy to explain. Louisiana has long enjoyed some of the nation's lowest gas prices, supported by abundant reserves, a dense pipeline network, and a mature extraction and processing industry, and utilities invested heavily in gas as shale production lowered prices and coal plants retired. That trend is set to continue: the gas plants being built to serve the Meta data center alone will raise the state's gas generating capacity by more than 35%.

Decades of stable, low gas prices may not hold. Growth in global LNG exports and domestic large-load demand is pulling prices upward, while producers, wary of boom-bust cycles, have limited new production. Geopolitical disruptions add further volatility. A generation mix concentrated in one fuel exposes utilities and ratepayers to that risk, and diversification is the conventional response. Nuclear already supplies about 15% but takes many years and high capital to expand. Solar can be deployed quickly at a levelized cost now near or below that of gas and battery storage increasingly shifts low-cost renewable output to peak hours. Taller wind turbines capable of reaching stronger winds have made onshore wind viable in the Gulf South. Wind generation is also strongest at night and in winter, so it functions as a suitable complement to the midday, summer-weighted peaks of solar. Emerging options like enhanced geothermal, advanced nuclear,

[3] U.S. Energy Information Administration, *Historical Annual Net Generation Tables 1990-2024*.

and long-duration storage could add firm or fuel-stable capacity but are on technology readiness timelines that are less certain.

Forum Perspectives

Renewables developers favor a hybrid energy mix pairing solar and wind with storage for peak shifting and gas peakers to fill gaps, an approach that can serve round-the-clock industrial loads while limiting fuel-price risk and emissions. It works best when generation sits close to load, which is not always feasible, and in Louisiana it depends on growing a nascent wind industry and on the LPSC and utilities reforming procurement processes to better reflect changes in technology costs.

Utility representatives positioned gas as the near-term firm, dispatchable backbone, citing supply chain certainty and a match to data center load profiles. Nuclear can serve those profiles but faces a roughly ten-year path to large-scale deployment. They pointed to clean tariff programs, Entergy's Geaux Green and Geaux Zero, and to tech-specific targeted procurement as faster vehicles for serving clean-power demand than traditional resource planning.

Emerging-technology proponents framed advanced nuclear, geothermal, and long-duration storage as the next wave, offering the state's Nuclear Strategic Framework as a sequencing template, and argued that demand response and distributed resources, including virtual power plants, should count as real capacity rather than afterthoughts.

3. Treat the Grid as Strategic Infrastructure

Challenge Context

For decades, transmission planning has followed generation, a technical step that came after the decision to build a power plant, but a new era of load growth is challenging that order. Industrial customers and site selectors now weigh grid deliverability alongside ports, pipelines, and water access, and a project that cannot connect on a workable timeline does not get built. The MISO South region includes several load pocket regions, where local demand that exceeds local generation coupled with limited import capacity can lead to outages. A realization of this risk occurred on May 25, 2025, when MISO declared a transmission emergency and ordered roughly 600 MW of load shed across Southeast Louisiana, cutting power to about 100,000 customers while more than half of the region's generation was offline and a storm-damaged transmission line limited imports.[4] Order 1920, issued in May 2024 by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), requires transmission providers to conduct long-term regional planning aimed at identifying the grid's 20-year needs. That mandate could support investment in long-range projects within MISO South that would provide a reliability hedge against future load-shedding events. Separate efforts, like a proposed set of interregional connections between MISO South and the Southwest Power Pool (SPP), could add import capacity for further reliability during periods of grid stress and broaden access to low-cost wind

[4] Midcontinent Independent System Operator, *May 25 Load Shed Event Report*, August 2025.

generation concentrated in SPP and other parts of MISO.

Forum Perspectives

Transmission experts at the forum recognized transmission as economic infrastructure, a backbone for industrial growth on par with pipelines and transportation infrastructure rather than an afterthought to generation. Their preference was to invest proactively in corridors where load is already materializing—rather than waiting for fully contracted projects in a way that builds in delay—and to run load forecasts, interconnection studies, and state resource planning in parallel rather than in sequence.

Advanced grid technology proponents argued that near-term tools go underused while long-range lines are planned. Grid-enhancing technologies, advanced conductors, and dynamic line ratings can free capacity on existing lines at lower cost. Participants recommended building those tools into MISO power-flow analyses so interconnection cost estimates reflect the capacity they can unlock and keep projects from dropping out of the queue.

Renewables developers described an interconnection process that does not function as intended, with some projects waiting seven years and uncertain network-upgrade costs forcing withdrawals before commercial operation. They called for scenario-based planning with deliberate headroom, sizing the system for a range of load and generation futures, and warned that expedited pathways weighted toward gas should not neglect projects in the main interconnection queue.

Ratepayer advocates framed transmission as a long-lived asset whose benefits accrue over decades and urged that planning should not stall in fights over cost allocation. They treated transparency and public education as part of the work, citing the May 25 event as evidence that residents will engage with grid questions that touch their bills and noting polling that indicated strong Louisiana voter support for transmission investments.

National-security voices offered a less familiar argument: the grid is a national-defense asset, with hundreds of military installations dependent on civilian power and Department of War reliability requirements that exceed what utilities provide. They pointed to NERC's move toward mandatory large-load reliability standards and framed defense interests as a potential source of cost-sharing for transmission in critical corridors.

4. Protect Affordability as Deployment Scales

Challenge Context

Low electricity rates have long been one of Louisiana's competitive advantages. The state has ranked among the lowest for retail electricity rates as recently as 2025. Yet average residential prices rose 14.1% from 2024 to 2025, more than double the 6.5% national increase, and Entergy Louisiana's residential base rates climbed over 30% between 2019

and 2024.[5] Two forces sit behind the trend: fuel-price volatility, which was addressed in the previous section, and capital requirements to serve new load and upgrade the grid. Utilities recover spending on generation, transmission, distribution, and grid hardening from ratepayers at a guaranteed rate of return, and Entergy alone has proposed more than $8.5 billion in such investment. Per the Pelican Institute's recent *Shock to the System* report, base rates could rise another 40% by 2030 if all pending proposals are approved. The question running through the Powering Louisiana Forum was who pays: whether large load customers will cover the full cost of generation assets built to serve them or if costs will end up spread across existing customers.

Forum Perspectives

Utility representatives presented a new cost allocation mechanism that can let growth pay for itself. Under Entergy's Fair Share Plus pledge, large load customers would cover the full direct cost of the power they require, contribute to the fixed system costs they benefit from, post collateral, and sign multi-year contracts with early-termination penalties tied to new generation. Their Meta agreement aligns with the pledge with a 20-year term, customer funding for storm and resilience costs that predate the project, and funding directed to efficiency programs for low-income customers. Entergy projected roughly $2.8 billion in Louisiana customer savings from the Meta arrangement, and pointed to clean tariff programs, time-of-use rates, and demand response as additional tools to meet demand for new large loads while limiting ratepayer exposure.

Ratepayer and consumer advocates accepted that large loads could lower per-unit costs if they pay their share, but only through proper rate design which is difficult to confirm without transparent regulatory processes. They prefer to see rate impacts, tax incidence, and subsidy benefits disclosed rather than reconstructed after the fact. They also questioned the benefits of waiving competitive bidding for large-load infrastructure at a moment of record capital spending, as competitive procurement is a primary check on cost. Some participants noted that Entergy's Fair Share Plus pledge, "lacks teeth," as it is not a binding contract structure, and the lack of clarity on the terms of the Entergy/Meta agreement requires ratepayers put substantial trust in their utilities and regulators. Others identified the Bring Your Own Generation (BYOG) framework as a useful approach to ensure the cost of generation for large loads doesn't impact ratepayer bills by keeping assets off of the utility rate base. The "private use electrical networks" envisioned in State Senator Hensgen's SB 490 bill would allow data centers and other large loads to build their own generation without needing regulatory approval from the LPSC. Several forum participants also viewed diversification as an affordability measure in its own right, echoing the fuel-volatility risk raised earlier.

5. Earn Local Buy-In Through Transparent Engagement

Challenge Context

[5] U.S. Energy Information Administration, retail residential electricity price data (2024-2025); Entergy Louisiana base-rate trend per Pelican Institute / R Street, *Shock to the System* (2026).

Local communities across the country are beginning to push back on data centers and clean energy developments in their backyards. Residents have voiced concerns about environmental impacts and strains on local utility resources resulting from data centers sited in their area, and some Louisiana parishes have moved to block solar development over its perceived impacts on agricultural land use. Local opposition could delay projects or even prohibit them altogether. Local concerns about clean energy may be fueled by a lack of familiarity, "industrial burnout," or even misinformation about environmental impacts and land use changes. Resident fears about noise, radiation, and electromagnetic fields persist even if the technical record does not support them. Fear and misinformation can snowball into local opposition that slows or halts projects if local leaders and project developers do not make good faith efforts to address concerns and communicate benefits early on.

The capacity to address misinformation and develop sound permitting practices varies widely across jurisdictions. Many parishes, rural ones in particular, have no land-use ordinance for utility-scale solar or large industrial projects and no planning staff to evaluate them. Act 279 of 2025 sought to add certainty to permitting for solar, onshore wind, and battery projects by creating a statewide permitting structure managed by the Department of Conservation and Energy. For solar projects, parishes may opt out by developing their own permitting and siting regulations and submitting a resolution stating as such. However, some parishes lack the resources to do so. Where that capacity is absent, even projects with willing landowners can stall. This could lead to rural landowners and communities missing out on the revenue potential of new projects. A utility-scale solar facility has the potential to generate 44-100 times the tax revenue of a comparable plot of agricultural land.[6]

Forum Perspectives

Local officials and community advocates identified trust as a precondition for every project. Binding agreements exist to codify the trust built between parties. Parishes are able to utilize various tools for leverage in project negotiations: permitting rules and fees, tax agreements like payments in lieu of taxes (PILOTs), and community benefit agreements (CBAs). The tools differ in who controls them. A PILOT is negotiated between the parish government and the developer, while a CBA gives residents a direct voice in how project revenue is spent (e.g. on schools, youth programs, or recreation), which changes the politics of approval. At one forum roundtable, staff from the Center for Planning Excellence (CPEX) pointed to their recent work in St. Helena Parish as a model for under-resourced rural parishes. CPEX helped the parish negotiate a CBA for the proposed 180 MW Independence Solar project by facilitating one-on-one conversations, hosting parish-wide workshops, and forming a community steering committee to shape the agreement's terms with the developer.[7] Advocates noted that holding consensus-

[6] Stephen Barnes, et. al., "The Impact of Utility-Scale Solar in Louisiana," Kathleen Blanco Public Policy Center, December 2025.

[7] "Building Community Through Agreements: St. Helena's Path to Partnership," *CPEX Quarterly Newsletter*, October 20, 2025. The Independence Solar project is described as 180 MW across more than 3,000 acres, with the St. Helena Police Jury appointing the St. Helena Economic Development Foundation, supported by CPEX, to lead the community benefit agreement process.

building meetings before formal police jury hearings let public concerns surface early and smoothed the path to approval. Funding for engagement efforts like the one in St. Helena Parish is critical to successful community outcomes: CPEX engagement was funded by outside philanthropic support rather than parish resources.

Project developers described the same predictability from the other side. They framed early, in-person engagement as the first step in entering a community, ahead of any CBA, PILOT, or permit discussion, because a project's size and design often shift in response to local feedback. They noted how phased approvals can serve both parties: a site plan approval gives a developer a financeable milestone to show lenders, while the parish keeps leverage through a later building permit. Developers favored PILOTs over the state's Industrial Tax Exemption Program, whose renewal after an initial five-year term they described as uncertain. A negotiated PILOT provides a predictable long-term rate. Both stakeholder groups agreed on the importance of sequencing. Developers noted that engagement builds local goodwill early-on and also addresses late-stage opposition risk. A reasonable playbook for parish ordinances and sustained investment in local planning capacity were other shared interests.

6. Improve Coordination and Collaboration Among Stakeholders

Challenge Context

To build the generation and transmission needed to serve Louisiana's emerging demand for load growth will require cooperation among multiple parties, all of whom answer to different authorities and prioritize different outcomes. A single large-load project might involve coordination between MISO, the Louisiana Public Service Commission, state agencies, the serving utility, the customer, ratepayers and the advocates who represent them, and the parish that hosts it, among various other entities. No one party controls the full planning sequence, and any step a single party may take often waits on approval or input from others. Coordination strains within MISO South run deep enough that some state regulators have questioned the benefit of MISO membership. In 2021. the LPSC considered, then shelved, a vote that could have compelled its utilities to leave MISO.[8] More recently, a Mississippi commissioner renewed calls to reassess membership.[9]

In the highly regulated electricity industry, many of the decisions made about building new generation or modernizing the grid require determining who bears the cost of new infrastructure and who captures its benefits. Cost allocation for transmission is a clear example of this dynamic. Approaches can spread costs across a region, assign them to the developer, or tie them to identified beneficiaries and each approach divides the burden differently. FERC's Order 1920 requires each planning region (e.g. MISO) to determine a default cost allocation method for long-range projects. FERC also granted the

[8] Mark Ballard, "Louisiana to stay in MISO after state regulators put off vote to leave transmission authority," *Acadiana Advocate*, November 17, 2021.

[9] Amanda Durish Cook, "Miss. Commissioner Revives Call for Reassessment of MISO Membership," *RTO Insider*, July 14, 2026.

ability for states to propose an agreed-upon alternative that would override the default.[10] MISO South regulators have proposed their own process that, once MISO's board approves a portfolio of projects, would give them up to six months to adopt an allocation method for those projects by a unanimous vote. The state's plan would give them more flexibility and control over cost allocation after projects have already been identified, but it requires unanimous agreement. If MISO South states cannot come to an agreement during that period, the cost allocation would follow MISO's default approach: a method that would spread the cost of a new project across the subregion's utilities in proportion to their share of its load. The LPSC and other MISO South state regulators previously opposed that method in earlier long-range planning rounds.[11] In addition, the proposed interregional connections between MISO South and SPP follow a separate, joint planning process under the two grid operators' operating agreement that has yet to produce an approved project.[12]

Forum Perspectives

Transmission experts in the forum's Transmission and Grid Resilience roundtable repeatedly noted that the binding constraint on grid investments is often not engineering or permitting. The challenge lies in getting all parties to agree on a methodology to divide costs and recognize benefits. Many comments expressed concern over the MISO South states' history of standstills and disagreements on cost allocation despite having plenty of venues and processes for negotiation. Participants tied the issue to project timelines: without an agreed-upon method, cost responsibility for any given line stays unsettled, and projects meant to give relief to the subregion's load pockets stall. Interregional lines between MISO and SPP were identified as a more challenging case. The SPP-MISO joint portfolio under study could have beneficial cost and reliability outcomes by pairing the wind concentrated in SPP with solar and gas in MISO, but the two regions have yet to settle how costs would be divided. Some participants were hopeful that interregional collaboration might succeed if the stakeholders can establish clear outcomes and preferences before the conversation turns to dollars and resist the paralysis of endless study. Others pointed toward more promising efforts like standing monthly sessions between MISO staff and LPSC staff and commissioners and the possibility for FERC's long-range planning rule to introduce routine, institutional practices that can persist through turnover in commission membership.

State agencies and economic development officials described cross-agency alignment as a driver of the state's economic development successes. The process of securing a large

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[10] FERC, Order No. 1920, *Building for the Future Through Electric Regional Transmission Planning and Cost Allocation* (May 2024), as modified on rehearing by Orders No. 1920-A (November 2024) and 1920-B (April 2025). Note: regional compliance filings, including MISO's, were due June 12, 2026. The Powering Louisiana Forum was held before this deadline.

[11] FERC, Docket No. ER22-995 (2022), approving MISO's subregional cost allocation for long-range transmission projects over protests from Entergy-region regulators; see also Commissioner Christie's concurrence concerning MISO subregional cost allocation in ER22-9 95-000.

[12] Ethan Howland, "MISO, SPP eye 500-kV cross-border projects to bolster reliability, save money," *Utility Dive*, March 9, 2026.

industrial investment now gathers Louisiana's permitting, economic development, and utility regulation authorities to the same table—but the arrangement is not yet structural. Institutionalizing this approach, so that it does not reset with each new secretary or commission, was presented as an objective for the state. Building in regular engagement with regional transmission organizations would enhance that effort. The reliability and cost questions raised by the transmission roundtable can be answered only in coordination with MISO and its neighbors, not within state lines.

Workforce and supply-chain voices framed the coordination challenge in different terms. The Louisiana Community and Technical College System was commended for assembling training curricula quickly enough to match the workforce that new energy and manufacturing projects require, and Source Louisiana—the state's supplier-registration platform—was offered as a way to keep economic impacts local by routing project spending to in-state vendors and subcontractors. The recommendation that followed was to pair every major siting decision with an explicit workforce and supply-chain plan, so the gains from a project reach Louisiana workers and companies rather than arriving from out of state.

7. Examine New Approaches to Regulation and Planning

Challenge Context

Louisiana regulates electricity through institutions and processes that were built for an era of slower load growth. Louisiana's vertically integrated utilities plan their generation through multi-year integrated resource plans, the Louisiana Public Service Commission requires complex regulatory proceedings to certify new generation and set rates, and MISO approves interconnections using a study process that might take years to move through. A framework that assumed predictable, incremental load growth and a narrow set of generation choices is now being confronted by gigawatt-scale projects on accelerated timelines and an emerging resource mix that could transform the grid and how it operates.

Louisiana is one of only a handful of states where the utility regulator's authority is written into the state constitution. Article IV gives the elected, five-member Public Service Commission jurisdiction over investor-owned utilities, and the state's courts have held that the legislature can add to the Commission's duties but cannot strip away or override its regulatory power. The state legislature governs the conditions for building energy projects—permitting, siting, taxation, and incentives—while the LPSC regulates the utilities that own and operate them. As load growth surges and energy costs rise, state lawmakers are increasingly considering their role in guiding the direction of Louisiana’s energy ecosystem. That effort has been most visible through SB 490, the "private use electrical networks" bill introduced in the 2026 legislative session that would allow large industrial users to build, own, and supply generation to themselves and others within a privately-owned system that does not require LPSC regulation as a public utility. The Commission responded by opening its own rulemaking process on the same question, highlighting the uncertainty over who writes the rules for large-load self-generation.

Federal policy has contributed additional uncertainty. The 2025 shift from the Inflation Reduction Act to the One Big Beautiful Bill Act compressed timelines for projects seeking wind and solar tax credits. Investments with decades long payback periods could struggle to navigate big swings in incentive policies between administrations and may need to factor in higher risk premiums to accommodate for policy uncertainty.

Any reform to Louisiana's regulatory framework will require tradeoffs of some sort. Regulation and management of the electricity system must address a "trilemma" with three competing priorities of affordability, reliability, and exogenous benefits (e.g. economic growth or carbon pollution reduction). A policy that seeks to advance one or two of the priorities has the potential to strain the other. At the same time, outcomes are often linked. A wave of large-scale data centers could burden the grid and ratepayer pocketbooks or bring needed investments in reliability while absorbing some of the system costs of existing customers. Extreme weather events like hurricanes or winter storms can threaten both reliability and affordability, but hardening the grid or transitioning to more distributed sources of generation requires capital investments that grow the rate base. Identifying an approach that satisfies all conditions and stakeholders has historically been difficult.

Forum Perspectives

Policy and legal experts diagnosed Louisiana's regulations as lagging the market, but preferred expanded regulatory options over deregulation. They emphasized that any effort at reform must navigate the constitutional split between the LPSC and the legislature. Private use networks and sleeved power purchase agreements (PPAs) were viewed as viable approaches to let large loads contract for power directly without entering the rate base. Some expressed a preference for technology-neutral tax credits that reward in-state development over procurement mandates like renewable portfolio standards. Others backed streamlined permitting, litigation reform such as settlement transparency and Attorney General defense against nuisance suits, and sensible tax policy.

Industrial customers and large-load buyers approached reform from the demand side, arguing that the market has already moved toward new procurement models (BYOG, clean transition tariffs, sleeved and virtual PPAs) and that Louisiana's regulatory framework needs to catch up to let customers transact for the clean, reliable power their global competitiveness requires. They wanted more transparency from utilities on pricing and generation-profile data, recognition of the benefits of distributed and corporate-procured resources, and planning processes that more accurately identify demand for large loads and clean energy. Several pointed approvingly to peer state implementations like Georgia Power's Customer-Identified Resource procurement option. Louisiana's SB 490 bill and its option for large loads to implement private use electrical networks outside of LPSC oversight was also viewed favorably by industry representatives.

Ratepayer and consumer advocates recognized the role of regulatory reform in meeting demand growth, but insisted the protections of competitive bidding, public notice, transparency, and fair cost allocation should not be casualties of speed-to-power. Ratepayer advocates called on the LPSC to ensure data centers pay their fair share and

warned that the lack of transparency, competitive procurement, and public input in recent expedited reviews has not built confidence in the current large load approval process. Advocates were aligned with large load buyers on the potential for BYOG models and private-use networks as a way to enable access to new generation, at speed, without adding to ratepayer burden.

Looking Forward

The Powering Louisiana Forum's central theme was how the state can navigate an unprecedented era of growth in its electricity system—one characterized by mega projects that require GW scale investments in a system that was not designed for such rapid and substantial growth. The variety of stakeholder groups and differing priorities expressed by forum participants highlights the difficulty of the challenge facing Louisiana. Adding data centers and large industrial projects to Louisiana's grid is already a daunting technical challenge. To do so in a way that does not burden existing ratepayers, enhances grid reliability, and allows Louisiana to move at the speed of global competition will require new forms of collaboration, new approaches to planning and regulation, and the incorporation of new technologies.

The challenge facing Louisiana extends beyond state lines and will require collaboration between state leaders, federal regulators, regional transmission organizations, and companies with international presence. Likewise, state bodies like the Public Service Commission, the legislature, and state government departments like Conservation and Energy must stay aligned on approaches to achieve economic development successes while maintaining low energy prices for residents and ensuring benefits flow to local communities. Building data centers and industrial facilities involves processes for siting, interconnection, resource procurement, and ratemaking that all have impacts on multiple entities. Establishing a framework that allows good faith participation and trust from all parties will be difficult, but it could pave the way for Louisiana to respond quickly to new opportunities while minimizing long-term risks.

An "all of the above" energy mix could unlock generation at the speed and scale needed to accommodate new demand, but conference participants indicated it would likely require utilities and regulators to embrace unfamiliar technologies. Growing Louisiana's renewable generation capacity could encourage companies who have low-carbon commitments or who export products to countries with low-carbon import requirements to site their projects in the state where they can access its low energy costs, established infrastructure, skilled workforce, and world-class port system. Offshore wind could deliver gigawatt-scale power to support load growth, with significant economic opportunities for Louisiana’s offshore workforce and ports but currently faces political headwinds. Conference participants pointed to demand response programs, distributed resources, battery storage, and other modern grid technologies as having the potential to open up grid capacity without more costly investments in generation capacity. Nuclear could see a renaissance in Louisiana, where it has already established a track record as a firm, dispatchable source of power, but it is unlikely to meet the short-term demand growth of data centers. Further long-term potential may be found in emerging technologies like

geothermal, long-duration energy storage, and advanced nuclear. Some conference participants recommended establishing new, technology neutral processes and policies to enable large load customers or utilities to implement technologies that meet specific goals and could increase reliability, maintain affordability, lower carbon emissions, and support Louisiana's ability to compete for economic development.

Some forum participants argued that achieving the goals outlined above may require alterations to the frameworks of resource planning and utility regulation in Louisiana that were developed in an era of slow, incremental growth. The massive scale of emerging data center and industrial projects challenges cost allocation and ratemaking paradigms that assume the benefits of investments in the grid will be shared equally across ratepayers. Finding an approach that allows utilities to respond quickly to large load requests while retaining affordability and reliability is the thorny "trilemma" faced by the LPSC and Louisiana legislators. Recent endeavors into expedited permitting and interconnection have moved some projects faster, but ratepayer advocates caution that competitive bidding, public notice, and transparency are put at risk when speed becomes the priority. Reform itself is constrained by the constitutional division between the Commission and the legislature and by federal incentive policies that shifts between administrations, all of which serve to cloud the path forward.

The challenges discussed at Powering Louisiana are complex and often opaque to outside observers, but they are becoming increasingly important to everyday residents of the state. Affordability is already a visible public concern as utility bills climb faster than inflation. Reliability events like the May 2025 load shed showed that residents will engage with grid questions once they reach their homes. As these issues press more directly on Louisiana voters and their elected officials and regulators, the value of forums like Powering Louisiana grows.

About the Powering Louisiana Forum

In April 2026, the Powering Louisiana Forum brought together industry, government, and public-sector stakeholders to chart a shared strategy for Louisiana to lead in an "all of the above" energy future. Hosted by the Southeastern Wind Coalition and GNO, Inc. at the Louisiana State University Energy Institute, the Forum convened at a pivotal moment: the state is experiencing unprecedented load growth, bringing both significant economic opportunity and surfacing critical questions about ensuring community benefits, affordability, and resilience. Through participatory dialogue, the Forum surfaced the critical issues limiting new power generation—transmission infrastructure, community engagement, market development, and policy—and the steps needed to fully realize Louisiana's "all of the above" vision. The Kathleen Blanco Public Policy Center was brought in to summarize the challenges and insights surfaced through the dialogue to inform the crucial planning, policy, and investment decisions ahead about the future of Louisiana's energy ecosystem. This report is the product of that summarization process.

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