

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

September 10, 2026

Chairman Laura V. Swett
Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
888 First Street, NE
Washington, DC 20426

Dear Chairman Swett:

I write to request that the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), in coordination with the North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC), conduct a comprehensive federal review of the widespread and prolonged power outages that followed the severe weather event, a derecho, that struck Northwest Indiana on August 11, 2026.

The derecho brought extraordinary straight-line winds across Northern Indiana, with peak wind gusts reaching approximately 100 to 110 miles per hour across portions of Lake and Porter Counties.¹ The storm caused unprecedented damage and resulted in nearly 375,000 customer outages within Northern Indiana Public Service Company's (NIPSCO) service territory. Tens of thousands of Northwest Indiana residents remained without electricity for nearly two weeks. This was the largest outage event in NIPSCO's history and far exceeded the average duration of electricity interruptions associated with major events.² The Cities of Gary, Lake Station, and Portage, as well as the Town of Munster, were among the hardest hit communities and the last areas to receive full restoration.

The consequences of these prolonged outages were significant. Families lost food, homes experienced flooding and subsequent mold growth, businesses lost inventory and revenue, and residents lost access to essential medical equipment and prescription medications. For many constituents, the lack of electricity also meant the loss of reliable access to phones, computers, internet service, and other means of communicating with family members, reporting outages, and applying for emergency assistance.

¹ National Weather Service, "August 11, 2026 Derecho."

² U.S. Energy Information Administration, "Electricity customers experienced prolonged outages following August 2026 severe weather."

Most concerning, vulnerable residents were left without reliable access to medical care and other essential services. For nearly two weeks, too many Northwest Indiana families were literally left in the dark.

On August 25, 2026, a federal Major Disaster Declaration was approved for Indiana, providing critical assistance as communities begin the long process of recovery. However, federal assistance must address not only the damage caused by this storm, but also what can be learned from the unprecedented duration of the resulting power outages.

The Indiana Office of Utility Consumer Counselor has petitioned the Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission (IURC) to investigate NIPSCO's storm restoration practices, and I strongly support that state-level investigation. At the same time, given the scale of this event, I believe a federal review is warranted.

I respectfully request a joint FERC-NERC investigation to assess what contributed to the prolonged outages and determine whether NIPSCO's preparation, system performance, and restoration efforts were consistent with applicable reliability requirements and best practices. I also request that the findings include recommendations to improve electric-grid reliability and storm resilience.

Specifically, I ask that the investigation examine whether NIPSCO and its parent company, NiSource, complied with FERC-approved federal reliability standards and whether any deficiencies in reliability planning, system resilience, or emergency response warrant additional federal action. The review should evaluate the following factors:

- **Storm preparedness:** The short- and long-term preparations NIPSCO undertook before the August 11 derecho, including emergency response planning, staffing, equipment, mutual-aid arrangements, and pre-positioning of resources.
- **Grid resilience and system design:** The performance and resilience of NIPSCO's distribution and transmission infrastructure in the face of extreme straight-line winds and increasingly severe weather events.
- **Vegetation management and maintenance:** The adequacy and effectiveness of routine maintenance and vegetation-management practices, particularly considering the significant investments NIPSCO has reported making in these areas.
- **Restoration performance:** The causes of the prolonged restoration timeline, including why certain communities remained without power substantially longer than others and whether restoration priorities, resource allocation, communications, and repair practices were appropriate.

- **Regional comparison:** NIPSCO's restoration performance compared with other electric utilities in Indiana and the surrounding region that experienced outages from the same weather event.
- **Infrastructure investments:** Whether the substantial investments NIPSCO has made in recent years toward infrastructure replacement, grid modernization, reliability, and vegetation management have produced the adequate levels of resilience.

This last point deserves particular scrutiny. NIPSCO has emphasized that recent rate increases are necessary to support infrastructure upgrades and improve grid reliability. Since 2016, customers have contributed approximately \$2.3 billion toward infrastructure replacement, and \$81 million towards vegetation management between 2023 and 2025.³ Given the magnitude of these investments, Northwest Indiana residents deserve to know why they experienced outages of this magnitude and duration, and whether additional investments, preparation, maintenance, or changes in reliability standards could have reduced the impact on families and businesses.

I appreciate your consideration of this request and your commitment to ensuring the reliability and resilience of our nation's electric grid. I also request that FERC coordinate, as appropriate, with the IURC, NIPSCO, state emergency-management officials, and other relevant stakeholders to implement the lessons learned from this event. I stand ready to work together to advance transparency and accountability, strengthen our electric infrastructure, and ensure that Northwest Indiana families and businesses can depend on safe, reliable, and affordable power.

Sincerely,



Frank J. Mrvan
Member of Congress

³ WFYI, "Braun calls for investigation into NIPSCO as Northwest Indiana power outages near 2 weeks," August 24, 2026.