Forum on Informed Investment, Technology, and Policy Pathways for the Electricity System and Interdependent Energy Infrastructure

Committee

Varun Rai

Chair

Dr. Varun Rai is the Walt and Elspeth Rostow Professor in the LBJ School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas at Austin, with a joint appointment in Mechanical Engineering. Through his interdisciplinary research at the interface of energy systems, complex systems, decision science, and public policy, he develops effective policy approaches to help accelerate the transition of the global energy system into a more sustainable and resilient one. He was a Global Economic Fellow in 2009. During 2013-2015 he was a Commissioner for the vertically-integrated electric utility Austin Energy and from 2019-2021 he served as director of the UT Austin Energy Institute. In 2016 the Association for Public Policy Analysis & Management (APPAM) awarded him the David N. Kershaw Award and Prize, which “was established to honor persons who, at under the age of 40, have made a distinguished contribution to the field of public policy analysis and management.” He received his Ph.D. and MS in Mechanical Engineering from Stanford University and a bachelor's degree in Mechanical Engineering from the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Kharagpur.

Mohit Chhabra

Member

Mohit Chhabra provides analysis and strategic guidance to policymakers and other stakeholders at the state, regional, and national levels. He is currently working on redesigning electricity pricing to facilitate decarbonization and enhance affordability, developing cost-effective pathways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and pollution from California's energy sector, and serving as a technical advisor to other regional teams at the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC). He is based in NRDC's New York City office.

Allison Clements

Member

Allison Clements joined the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission in December 2020 following a range of public and private sector experience in energy law and grid modernization policy. She served in this role through June 2024, and has now transitioned into independent consulting. Prior to her FERC role, she worked at Energy Foundation, Goodgrid LLC, and Natural Resources Defense Council. She began her legal career in private practice at Troutman Sanders LLP and Chadbourne & Parke LLP. Over the course of her career, her clients have included utilities, independent power producers, developers, lenders, nonprofits, and philanthropies. Commissioner Clements has also served as a federal energy expert in several capacities, including as a member of a National Academies of Sciences committee on grid resilience and as a clinical visiting lecturer at Yale Law School. She holds a Bachelor of Science from the University of Michigan and a Juris Doctorate from The George Washington University Law School.

Jeffery Dagle

Member

Jeffery Dagle is chief electrical engineer for electricity infrastructure resilience at the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (PNNL). He currently manages several projects in the areas of transmission reliability, system operations, and security, including the Grid Modernization Laboratory Consortium (GMLC) and the North American SynchroPhasor Initiative (NASPI). Jeff Dagle has worked at the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory in Richland Washington, operated by Battelle for the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), since 1989. He has expertise in power system modeling, analysis, and advanced measurements, supporting or leading numerous projects in the areas of transmission reliability and security. Recent project highlights include leading the North American SynchroPhasor Initiative and serving on the leadership team of the DOE Grid Modernization Laboratory Consortium, leading the multi-laboratory system operations and control technical area. Mr. Dagle is the co-director of the Advanced Grid Institute, a joint institute with Washington State University. He is a Senior Member of the IEEE and currently serves as the vice president for the eastern region of the Washington Society of Professional Engineers. He received B.S. and M.S. degrees in Electrical Engineering from Washington State University in 1989 and 1994, respectively, and is a registered professional engineer in the State of Washington.

Jeff Dagle is a chief electrical engineer at the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, operated by Battelle for the U.S. Department of Energy, and receives ongoing programmatic funding from the DOE Office of Electricity, the sponsor of this Forum.

Megan Decker

Member

Megan Decker currently works as an independent consultant. Most recently, Decker was a member of the Oregon Public Utility Commission from 2017 to 2025, serving as Chair from 2018. Previously, she worked in various roles as a lawyer representing land developers, the Port of Portland, and Renewable Northwest, a regional renewable energy advocacy organization. As a Commissioner, Decker has held leadership roles related to Western regional electricity coordination, serving from 2019 to 2025 as Co-Chair of the Committee on Regional Electric Power Cooperation. Decker is a graduate of Stanford University and University of Washington School of Law.

Deepakraj M. Divan

Member

Dr. Deepak Divan does research in power electronics, power systems, smart grids, and distributed control of power systems. He works closely with utilities and industry and is actively involved in research, teaching, and entrepreneurship. He is coauthor of the book ‘Energy 2040 – Aligning Innovation, Economics and Decarbonization’ (Springer 2024). Dr. Divan has started several companies, including Smart Wires, GridBlock, GigaGrid and Varentec, which was funded by Khosla Ventures and Bill Gates.

Dr. Divan is a member of the DOE Electricity Advisory Committee for 2024-2026. He is a Member of the US National Academy of Engineering, past member of the National Academies Board on Energy and Environmental Systems, and the NAE committee on The Future of Electric Power in the United States. He is a member of the Transformative Science & Technology Committee organized by NASEM for the Department of Defense. He received the 2024 IEEE Medal in Power Engineering, 2006 IEEE William E Newell Field Medal and the 2023 IEEE Hingorani Custom Power Medal. He is a Life Fellow of the IEEE and past President of the IEEE Power Electronics Society. He has presented on electric grids globally, including at the COP-22 meeting in Morocco and the UN Global Solutions Summit in 2023.

Robert Gramlich

Member

Rob Gramlich is Founder and President of Grid Strategies, a Washington DC based consulting firm focused on bulk power transmission and markets in pursuit of reliable, low-cost, and low carbon power systems. Rob and his Grid Strategies colleagues frequently testify as experts at state commissions, FERC, and Congress and have produced a series of white papers available on their web site. Rob and Grid Strategies have also appeared recently as experts in national news stories in the Washington Post, Fox Business, New York Times, NPR, C-SPAN, and the Wall Street Journal. Rob was formerly SVP and Interim CEO, American Wind Energy Association, Economic Advisor to FERC Chairman Pat Wood III, and Senior Economist at PJM Interconnection LLC. Rob has a BA with honors in Economics from Colby College and a Master of Public Policy degree from UC Berkeley. He has earned awards from FERC as Exemplar of Public Service, the Energy Systems Integration Group for contributions to market design and transmission planning, and the American Wind Energy Association for Technical Achievement.

Utopia Hill

Member

Utopia Hill is the Chief Executive Officer at Reactivate. Utopia provides leadership and strategic direction to a diverse, rapidly growing, innovative team. In her role, she manages and fosters relationships with industry partners, businesses, and communities, while also growing the company to ensure positive environmental and social impacts to the communities served by Reactivate projects.

Utopia previously served as Head of Engineering, Procurement, and Construction (EPC) at Reactivate and as Vice President of Renewables Construction for Invenergy. After beginning her career at General Electric, Utopia spent nearly two decades at Invenergy in roles within engineering, procurement, and construction. She has been involved in over 10,000 MW of renewables projects including wind, solar and energy storage. Utopia has been recognized for her sharp intellect, detailed dedication to project execution, and ability to effectively collaborate with cross-functional teams.

She currently serves as an advisory board member for The Pew Charitable Trusts’ Distributed Energy Resources Advisory Council, a group dedicated to advancing renewable energy adoption through research and policy solutions. Additionally, she serves on the advisory board for Vote Solar and the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine’s Electricity Forum. She previously served as Board Vice-President for the Boys & Girls Club of West Cook County, where she championed STEM programming for youth from low-income and underrepresented communities. Utopia holds a degree in Aerospace Engineering from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and has completed Executive Education coursework at Harvard Business School.

Michael Howard

Member

Dr. Howard is a leader in energy innovation, serving as CEO of the Electric Power Research Institute (EPRI). EPRI is a nonprofit organization focused on research in generating, delivering, and using electricity. Dr. Howard earned a B.S. in Electrical Engineering and a Ph.D. in Engineering from the University of Tennessee, where he specialized in artificial intelligence. In 1992, Dr. Howard became president of a power quality company providing technical solutions to industrial customers. EPRI acquired the company in 1999, leading to a future leadership role at EPRI. After being appointed CEO of EPRI in 2010, he led the organization until his retirement in 2020, when he was honored as CEO Emeritus. Beyond EPRI, Dr. Howard serves on the boards of multiple energy-focused services companies and contributes to global discussions on energy innovation. Dr. Howard recently contributed to a technical committee at the U.S. National Academies of Sciences. In 2019, he received the Distinguished Energy Award in Washington, D.C., recognizing his lifetime contributions to global energy innovation and leadership.

L. Lynne Kiesling

Member

Lynne Kiesling is an economist focusing on regulation, market design, and the economics of digitization in the electricity industry. She is Director of the Institute for Regulatory Law & Economics in the Center on Law, Business, and Economics, and is an Adjunct Professor in the Master of Science in Energy and Sustainability program, both at Northwestern University. She is also a Research Professor at University of Colorado Denver. Her academic background includes a B.S. in Economics from Miami University (Ohio) and a Ph.D. in Economics from Northwestern University.

Lynne's academic interests have long been focused on technology, the economic history of technological change, and how regulation and other institutions shape incentives to innovate. Her academic publications include Deregulation, Innovation, and Market Liberalization: Electricity Restructuring in a Constantly Evolving Environment (Routledge, 2008) and journal articles and book chapters on competition, market design, and the important role that market prices play as communication mechanisms in complex, decentralized networks. More recently, she and co-authors analyzed incomplete markets in risk in ERCOT in light of the 2021 Winter Storm Uri outages in "Private Risk and Social Resilience in Liberalized Electricity Markets," Joule (2022), and she and Stephen Littlechild used a decentralized market process framework to analyze policy responses to Winter Storm Uri and recommend alternatives in "Hayek and the Texas Blackout," Electricity Journal (2021).

Lynne has also contributed to the development of transactive energy systems since collaborating on the GridWise Olympic Peninsula Testbed Demonstration Project in 2006-2007. She is currently working in collaboration with David Chassin (SLAC National Laboratory, Stanford University) and Post Road Foundation on a U.S. Department of Energy Connected Communities research grant to test transactive energy in rural communities.

In addition to her academic research, Lynne is currently a member of the U.S. Department of Energy's Electricity Advisory Committee, which provides advice to DOE on modernizing electricity infrastructure. She has also served as a member of the U.S. National Institute of Standards and Technology's Smart Grid Advisory Committee, and was a member of the GridWise Architecture Council 2005-2010, where she remains an emerita member.

Mark G. Lauby

Member

Mark G. Lauby is the senior vice president and chief engineer at the North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC). Mr. Lauby joined NERC in January 2007 and has held several positions. Prior to joining NERC, Mr. Lauby worked for the Electric Power Research Institute (EPRI) for 20 years. Mr. Lauby began his electric industry career in 1979 at the Mid-Continent Area Power Pool in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

In 2012, Mr. Lauby was elected to the NAES Board and was appointed to the DOE Electric Advisory Committee by the Secretary of Energy in 2014. Recognition includes the 1992 IEEE Walter Fee Young Engineer of the Year Award, named a Fellow by IEEE in November 2011, the IEEE Power and Energy Society's Roy Billinton Power System Reliability Award in 2014. Elected as a member of The National Academy of Engineering In 2020, citing his development and application of techniques for electric grid reliability analysis, and is author of more than 150 technical papers about power system reliability, transmission planning, and power system numerical analysis techniques. He earned his bachelor's and master's degrees in electrical engineering from the University of Minnesota and attended the London Business School Accelerated Development Program as well as the Executive Leadership Program at Harvard Business School.

Debra Lew

Member

Dr. Lew is the Executive Director of the Energy Systems Integration Group (ESIG) which is an educational, member-driven organization that provides peer learning on state-of-the-art issues in electricity and energy systems integration. She has expertise in wind, solar, and distributed energy resources integration and a focus on 100% clean energy systems. She is a Past Chair of the IEEE PES Renewables Systems Integration Coordinating Committee, member of IEEE Standards Committee 21 that focuses on DER standards including IEEE 1547, and a member of the IEA Wind Task 25. She has written numerous papers and speaks globally on issues of energy systems integration. She previously worked at the National Renewable Energy Laboratory, GE, the International Institute for Energy Conservation, Princeton University, and was seconded to Hawaiian Electric Company during 2009-2010. She has a PhD and MS in Applied Physics from Stanford and BS degrees in Electrical Engineering and Physics from MIT.

Ari Matusiak

Member

Ari Matusiak is co-founder, president and CEO of Rewiring America. He is founder and co-chair of Power Forward Communities, a national coalition awarded $2 billion from the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund to decarbonize and reinvest in American households. He was founding partner of, and is currently a senior advisor to, PVG, a fast-growing consulting firm committed to driving climate solutions that also deliver real economic value at scale. Matusiak was previously the co-founder and chair of Young Invincibles, a nonprofit that gave voice to young adults in the health reform debate and helped drive passage of the Affordable Care Act, and was chief strategy officer of Renovate America, a residential energy efficiency and renewable energy financing platform. From 2011 through 2014, he was special assistant to the president and director of private sector engagement in the Obama White House. Earlier in his career, Matusiak was vice president of strategy and community impact at the Rhode Island Foundation and co-founder and director of HousingWorks RI, a coalition that catalyzed over $1 billion in affordable housing development and thousands of good paying jobs in the Ocean State. He graduated cum laude and as a Public Interest Law Scholar from Georgetown University Law Center, and is a magna cum laude, Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Brown University.

Jennifer Schilling

Member

As Vice President of Grid Modernization, Jennifer is the leader of cross-functional teams developing and implementing strategies in three states to integrate technologies that improve reliability and support the integration of distributed energy resources. She is responsible for all aspects of the grid modernization strategy for the distribution utility serving over 3.5 million customers in New England. Jennifer has been with Eversource for over ten years where she held various director positions in the organization before the founding of the grid modernization group in 2017. In her role, Jennifer oversees business strategy with respect to the evolving need for the electric power system to create value for customers by intelligently incorporating clean distributed energy resources. Prior to joining Eversource, Jennifer was the director of corporate strategic planning for Reliant Energy, a national independent power producer. Jennifer graduated from Barnard College with a BA in environmental science and political science and has an MBA from Duke University.

Susan F. Tierney

Member

Dr. Susan Tierney, a Senior Advisor at Analysis Group, is an expert on energy economics, regulation, and policy, particularly in the electric and gas industries. She consults to businesses, government agencies, foundations, tribes, environmental groups, and other organizations on energy markets, economic and environmental regulation and strategy, and climate-related energy policies. Previously, Dr. Tierney served as the Assistant Secretary for Policy at the U.S. Department of Energy, and was the Secretary for Environmental Affairs in Massachusetts, Commissioner at the Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities, and Executive Director of the Massachusetts Energy Facilities Siting Council. She co-authored the energy chapter of the National Climate Assessment, and serves on the boards of the Barr Foundation, Resources for the Future, and World Resources Institute. She recently served on the boards of ClimateWorks Foundation and the Energy Foundation. She has served on several National Academies' Committees, including The Future of Electric Power and Accelerating Decarbonization of the U.S. Economy. She taught at the Department of Urban Studies and Planning at MIT and at the University of California at Irvine, and has lectured at Harvard University, University of Chicago, Yale University, New York University, Tufts University, Northwestern University, and University of Michigan. Dr. Tierney has a Ph.D. and Master's degree in regional planning from Cornell University and a B.A. in Art History from Scripps College.

Gordon van Welie

Member

Gordon van Welie (NAE) is President and Chief Executive Officer of ISO New England Inc., having previously served as the company's Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer. He joined ISO New England from Siemens Power Transmission & Distribution LLC, where he served as Vice President and General Manager of the Power Systems Control Division and was responsible for managing information technology solutions for electric companies. Before coming to Siemens, Mr. van Welie held several positions at ESKOM, South Africa's electric utility based in Johannesburg. Mr. van Welie is a member of a number of industry groups, including the National Academy of Engineering, the Executive Committee of the U. S. National Committee of CIGRE, the Member Representatives Committee of the North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC), the ISO/RTO Council, and the IEEE Power & Engineering Society. He is a recipient of 2017 Utility Variable-Generation Integration (UVIG) Achievement Award and, in 2016, was awarded the IEEE Power & Energy Society Leadership in Power Award.

Kirsten Verclas

Member

Kirsten Verclas is Senior Managing Director at the National Association of State Energy Officials (NASEO). She leads NASEO’s electricity program, which informs and educates the states on issues related to generation, transmission, and distribution, and NASEO's energy security program, focused on resilience, energy security planning, and cybersecurity. Prior to NASEO, Ms. Verclas was an ORISE Science and Technology Policy Fellow at the U.S. Department of Energy, where she worked on clean energy, state and local energy policy, cybersecurity issues and emergency response. She also served as a Program Manager in the International Department of the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC) working on regulatory partnerships in Africa, as well as a Senior Program Manager at the American Institute for Contemporary German Studies (AICGS) at Johns Hopkins University. Ms. Verclas has written extensively on national and international energy and climate issues as well as security policy in the transatlantic context. She is a member of the U.S. Department of Energy’s Electricity Advisory Committee. Ms. Verclas holds a Bachelor of Arts in International Relations from Franklin and Marshall College, a Master of Arts in International Relations from The George Washington University, and a Master of Science in Energy Policy and Climate from Johns Hopkins University.

Brent Heard

Staff Officer

Brent Heard is a Senior Program Officer with the Board on Energy and Environmental Systems at the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine. He is currently leading work at the Academies on electricity system reliability and decarbonization, applying life-cycle assessment for fuels policy and regulation, as well as supporting the development of a research agenda for atmospheric methane removal. Previously, Brent directed a consensus study on the future of net energy metering, and as well as led reports on life-cycle assessment methods for low-carbon transportation fuels, the future of electric power in the U.S., and a series of workshops on federal clean energy innovation policy. He completed his PhD examining the sustainability implications of expansions and innovations in refrigerated food supply chains from the University of Michigan’s Center for Sustainable Systems, publishing in high-impact journals including Environmental Science & Technology and having his research featured by news outlets including NPR, TIME, Forbes, and The Guardian. He earned a B.S. in Economics with an additional major in Environmental Policy from Carnegie Mellon University.