

TALKING POINTS *Published October 23, 2026 · 5 minute read*

On Permitting Reform: How To Talk About BAAJA

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The permitting system in America is broken. Cumbersome bureaucracy and regulations have made it incredibly hard to build new energy projects and expand American energy production. Our aging electric grid is struggling to keep up, leaving US families and small businesses with skyrocketing energy prices.

Third Way's research has shown just how bad the problem is: over 70% of transmission and solar developers identified federal permitting as one of their biggest hurdles, with National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) reviews causing the longest delays. Meanwhile, energy-intensive industries, particularly data centers, are putting enormous pressure on the electricity system. Consumers feel this: 83% of voters are concerned about household electricity costs, and 79% say their bills have gone up in the last two years.

The US needs more clean energy and more transmission to make energy reliable and affordable, and there's no way to do that without permitting reform. The Bipartisan American Affordability and Jobs Act (BAAJA) is the legislation we need today to build the energy system of tomorrow.

There are three messaging frames through which we can explain why permitting reform matters and why passing BAAJA is the best way forward. This bill will:

- Make Energy More Affordable, Create Jobs, and Boost Economic Growth
- Hold Data Centers Accountable
- Help America Build Clean Energy and Fight Climate Change

FRAME 1: Permitting Reform Will Make Energy More Affordable, Create Jobs, and Boost Economic Growth

TOPLINE: The Bipartisan American Affordability and Jobs Act (BAAJA) will cut costs and grow our economy. It will unlock new infrastructure projects that will make electricity cheaper, boost manufacturing and construction, and create jobs in communities across the country.

- Electricity bills are going up because we can't build. The most complex federal reviews average almost four years. Opponents can sue for six years after that.
- The bill makes it faster and less expensive to build and repair energy projects of all types, as well as roads, bridges, and other vital infrastructure.
- We need to build new power lines to meet growing demand, and this bill helps get that done. But it also requires utility companies to use the power lines we already have

more efficiently, which cuts costs and keeps more money in customers' pockets.

- New modeling from [C2ES and Greenline Insights](#) shows that simply reforming how we build new transmission lines and connect them to the grid could reduce household power bills by \$19 billion through 2040.
- This is a win for American jobs. Every energy project stalled or canceled because of a broken permitting system keeps workers sitting on the sidelines—from electricians, engineers, and construction workers to the manufacturers supplying the equipment.

FRAME 2: Permitting Reform Will Hold Data Centers Accountable

TOPLINE: The Bipartisan American Affordability and Jobs Act would be the first legislation Congress passes that actually **holds data centers accountable**, making sure they pay the full cost of powering their facilities so households and businesses aren't stuck with the bill.

- Data centers put pressure on our electric grid, which could cause families' energy costs to soar. But families shouldn't be left paying for the AI boom.
- This bill includes effective ratepayer protection provisions—rules that empower states, local utilities, and communities to demand real, long-term investments from data center developers—not empty promises.
- The Bipartisan American Affordability and Jobs Act keeps data centers on the hook for the costs they add to the power system—even if developers change or abandon their plans.
- Federal agencies that track electricity usage will now separately report on data center activities, a much-needed step towards transparency for the industry.

FRAME 3: Permitting Reform Helps America Build Clean Energy and Fight Climate Change

TOPLINE: To fight climate change, we need more clean energy. But complicated federal regulations make it difficult to get projects built and connected to our electric grid. The Bipartisan American Affordability and Jobs Act was designed to lift barriers to clean energy construction. The bill will help bring more clean electricity online and slash greenhouse gas emissions.

- The Bipartisan American Affordability and Jobs Act was negotiated by some of the most trusted champions for climate and the environment in the US Congress,

ensuring the bill will help build more clean energy projects, reduce pollution, and protect our environment.

- Modeling from [C2ES and Greenline Insights](#) finds that the interconnection and transmission reforms in BAAJA could reduce emissions by 71 million metric tons (9%) by 2035.
 - The bill makes several changes to federal permitting systems that will make it easier to build transmission, which moves electricity from solar arrays, wind turbines, and power plants to American homes and businesses.
 - That's critical for clean energy—many clean energy projects fail because there isn't adequate transmission to move the energy from where it's produced to where it's needed.
 - In our current system, connecting new energy projects to the grid can take years. Interconnection reforms streamline the study process, alleviate backlogs, and provide cost clarity to developers so we can get shovel-ready projects connected faster and keep up with growing demand.
 - This especially benefits clean energy projects, since they make up the vast majority of projects waiting to connect to the grid.
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