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Friday June 23, 1:05 pm Eastern Time

Utility, consumer groups back House power dereg bill

WASHINGTON, June 23 (Reuters) - A group of U.S. electric utilities and consumer groups on Friday urged House Commerce Committee Chairman Thomas Bliley to keep working on legislation to restructure the power sector, saying a pending bill advances their beliefs in opening the transmission grid.

In a letter from the Electricity Restructuring Stakeholders to Bliley, the coalition applauds the committee discussion draft for emphasising the need for a competitive wholesale power market open to all power players.

"Your June 7 discussion draft pinpoints and dramatically advances one of the critical issues identified by the Stakeholders' principles: the need for all uses of the transmission system to operate under a single set of open access rules," the group said.

Stakeholders include utilities like UtiliCorp United (NYSE:[UCU](#) - [news](#)) and groups like the Consumer Federation of America.

Bliley, a Virginia Republican, has not announced when the committee would meet to possibly vote on a final restructuring bill, having delayed a previous bill drafting session earlier this month.

Any hope of passing an electricity restructuring bill in Congress this year lies with Bliley's panel, since the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee this week failed to agree on a comprehensive plan, instead opting to pass a grid reliability plan.

The Stakeholders said agreement still needs to be reached in the House panel on jurisdictional questions surrounding the open-access provision.

In addition to opening the grid, the group wants the following measures included in a final restructuring effort:

- * repeal of the Public Utility Holding Company Act (PUCHA);
- * prospective repeal of the mandatory purchase and ownership requirements of the Public Utility Regulatory Policies Act (PURPA);

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- * extension of Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) jurisdiction to all transmitting entities;
- * adoption of language promoting the reliable operation of the U.S. electric system; and,
- * affirmation of FERC authority to issue regulations to promote Regional Transmission Organisation formation generally consistent with FERC Order 2000.

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