Hispanics In Energy

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2026 Energy Legislative Summit

Powering America's Energy Future

April 14, 2026

Edison Electric Institute, Washington, D.C.

Prepared by:
Frederick Pfaeffle Arana
President & CEO, EPC LLC, Energy Partners Solutions

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OVERVIEW

On April 14, 2026, Hispanics In Energy (HIE) convened the 2026 Energy Legislative Summit at the Edison Electric Institute in Washington, D.C., bringing together more than 40 senior leaders from Congress, the federal government, major energy companies, trade associations, technology firms, academic institutions, and the Hispanic community. The daylong summit – featuring keynote presentations, CEO fireside chats, and six panel discussions – provided a national platform for examining the most urgent challenges facing the U.S. energy system.

The event was livestreamed nationally and underscored the growing stature of HIE's annual summits as a critical bridge between Capitol Hill and the energy sector. A central conviction animated every session: Hispanic Americans must be fully integrated into the policy decisions, workforce pipelines, and economic opportunities that are defining America's energy future.

The 2026 summit was convened against a backdrop of accelerating energy demand, tightening infrastructure constraints, and an administration focused on energy leadership, reliability, and affordability. Discussions ranged from grid reliability and permitting reform to workforce development, supply chain resilience, and Hispanic business access. The consensus across every session was unambiguous: the United States is in a race to build, permit, and staff the energy infrastructure its economy and national security require – and every community must be fully engaged in that effort.

THE DEFINING CHALLENGE

The U.S. energy system is operating under unprecedented and sustained demand growth driven by the convergence of artificial intelligence workloads and hyperscale data centers, the reindustrialization and reshoring of semiconductor and advanced materials production, the electrification of transportation and buildings, and domestic expansion of liquefied natural gas, petrochemical, and refining activity. These forces, combined with climate-driven increases in peak load demand, have fundamentally changed the scale and urgency of energy system planning.

> *"We are adding new energy sources to the grid in real time while keeping it fully reliable for households, industry, and critical infrastructure that cannot afford interruptions as we support the nation's economic growth."*
>
> **– Joseph Dominguez, President & CEO, Constellation Energy, and HIE Chairman**

Representative Julie Fedorchak (ND-At Large), speaking in a fireside chat with HIE President and CEO José L. Pérez, characterized the structural challenge in terms of three immediate priorities: stop retiring generation prematurely, optimize the use of existing assets, and accelerate investment in new capacity by removing barriers to permitting and development.

Speakers across every session converged on a single organizing insight: the constraint facing the U.S. energy system is no longer capital availability – it is the ability to execute: to move projects through permitting, connect them to the grid, and staff them with qualified workers at a speed commensurate with demand growth.

KEY THEMES AND FINDINGS

Grid Reliability and the All-of-the-Above Imperative

The opening panel and multiple subsequent sessions reinforced that no single energy resource can meet the scale and variability of projected demand. Nuclear energy was consistently identified as essential for firm, always-on baseload capacity. Natural gas was described as the reliability backbone enabling the broader system to function at peak demand. Renewables and storage were recognized as important cost and flexibility tools, but cannot substitute for dispatchable capacity. Market structures were identified as a growing concern, with regulated markets viewed as better positioned to finance long-duration infrastructure than competitive markets that struggle to incentivize adequate dispatchable generation. Transmission bottlenecks and permitting delays – not fuel scarcity – were identified as the primary near-term constraints on resource adequacy.

Permitting Reform as the First-Order Priority

Permitting reform was the most consistently cited policy priority across panels and remarks. Speakers described a system in which projects that should take one to two years routinely take five to ten, adding billions in cost and delaying critical capacity additions. Representative Henry Cuellar (TX-28) reinforced this in his spotlight address, warning that delays are passed on directly to consumers and undermine domestic competitiveness. Panelists across the summit pointed to NEPA streamlining, interagency coordination reform, and litigation certainty as the specific levers that would most immediately accelerate deployment.

> *"To meet our future energy needs, we need improved permitting processes and litigation reform."*
> **– Pedro Azagra, CEO, Iberdrola Group**

Workforce Shortages as a Binding Constraint

Workforce availability was identified in every session as a constraint of equal urgency to permitting. The energy sector faces structural shortages of electricians, lineworkers, welders, nuclear technicians, pipefitters, and engineers across every segment of the value chain. Randall Stamper of the Virginia Community College System stated that the training system could quadruple its output and still not meet demand. Missy Henriksen of the Center for Energy Workforce Development emphasized the full breadth of roles in shortage: welders, engineers, electricians, and pipefitters alike.

Hispanic workers already represent a substantial and growing share of the energy construction, utility operations, and clean energy installation workforce. Speakers throughout the summit emphasized that this demographic reality makes the expansion of Latino workforce pipelines not merely an equity goal but a national economic imperative. Suzanna Valdez Wolfe, CEO of the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers, was unequivocal on the point: Latino talent is simply the best talent in the country.

Hispanic Business Access and Supply Chain Inclusion

Panel 5 addressed a persistent structural gap: Hispanic-owned businesses are substantially underrepresented in energy supply chains despite the sector's dependence on the communities they serve. Ramiro Cavazos of the U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce identified access to capital as the primary barrier, with procurement complexity, contracting system opacity, and limited early engagement with large utilities and federal agencies compounding the challenge.

The panel was equally clear that supply chain inclusion is not a charitable objective — it is a strategic necessity. Constraints in transformers, cables, and critical components are already slowing deployment and increasing costs, and Hispanic-owned firms represent an underutilized capacity pool that the sector cannot afford to ignore.

Artificial Intelligence, Innovation, and Digital Transformation

Artificial intelligence emerged as both the primary driver of demand growth and a transformative tool for grid operations and workforce productivity. HIE Chairman Dominguez described AI-driven hyperscale data centers as a structural demand shock reshaping utility planning timelines from five-year cycles to six-month strategies. Speakers highlighted that AI is already being applied to hydro dispatch optimization, nuclear fuel management, outage prediction, and interconnection planning. Panelists consistently agreed that AI will reshape rather than eliminate workforce needs, increasing demand for hybrid technical roles that combine traditional trades knowledge with digital systems literacy.

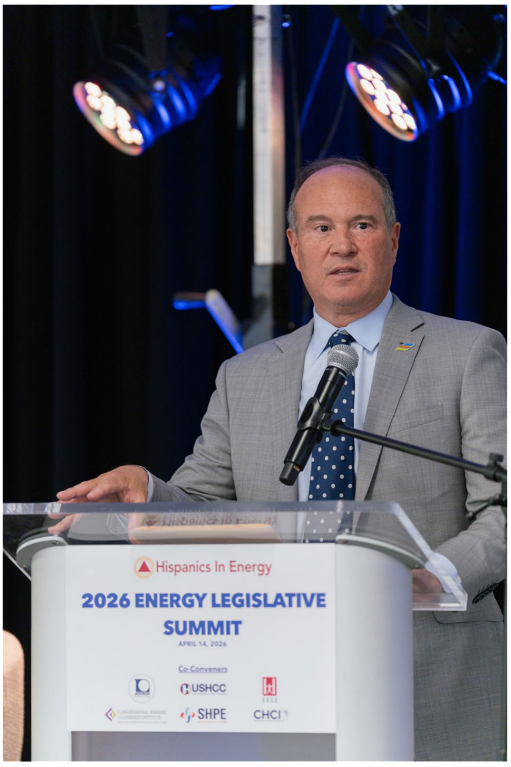
Community Engagement and Trust

Panel 2 reinforced that the success of major energy and digital infrastructure projects increasingly depends on early, sustained, and culturally competent community engagement. Representatives from Google and Microsoft described engagement as a full project lifecycle function beginning at conception, not a permitting-stage obligation. Community leaders warned that delayed or transactional outreach significantly increases opposition, cost, and regulatory risk. Mary Ann Gomez Orta of the Congressional Hispanic Leadership Institute identified declining civic literacy and fragmented information ecosystems as compounding barriers, noting that communities are increasingly shaped by incomplete or misleading digital content on complex infrastructure questions.

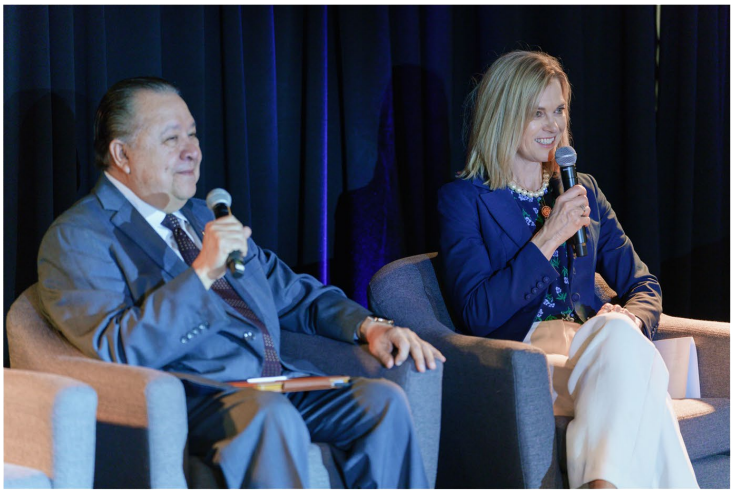
THE 2026 POLICY AGENDA

The summit produced a coherent and specific set of federal policy requests, presented in alignment with the administration's priorities of energy leadership, reliability, and affordability. Hispanics In Energy calls on the federal government to take the following actions:

1. Engagement with top energy executives, government officials, regulators and to help shape policy and investments.
2. Expansion of workforce funding tied directly to shovel-ready energy infrastructure projects, ensuring training aligns with real-time labor demand, including by accelerating apprenticeships, credentialing, and earn-and-learn models aligned with national energy buildout priorities. These efforts would include expanding partnerships between utilities, labor unions, and community colleges to rapidly scale electricians, lineworkers, nuclear technicians, and engineers.
3. Increased investment in educational institutions, including HSIs, technical colleges, and apprenticeship programs, to scale energy workforce production at national levels.
4. Procurement access reforms to ensure small businesses can compete in and benefit from federal and utility energy infrastructure spending.
5. Data-driven accountability frameworks to measure workforce and leadership participation, project delivery timelines, and supply chain inclusion across federal energy programs.

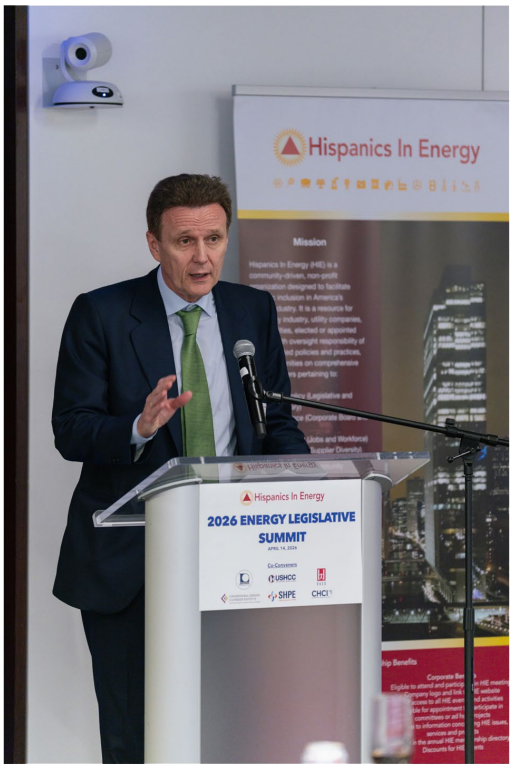


Joseph Dominguez

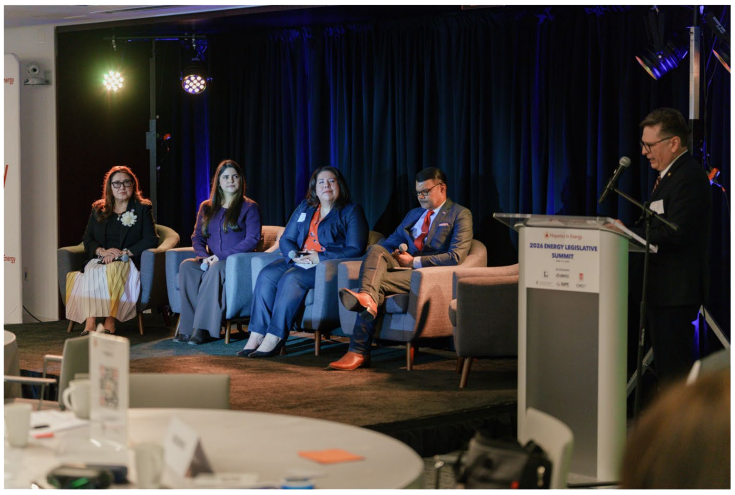


José Pérez, Rep. Julie Fedorchak (R-ND)

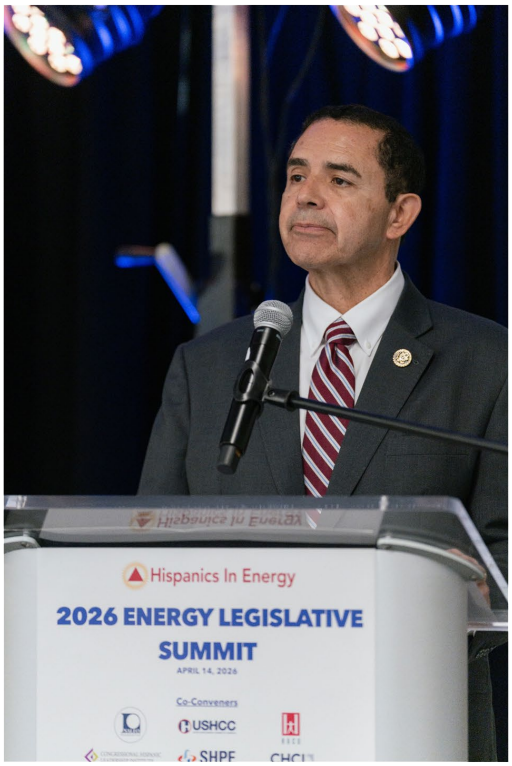
Members of the HIE Board of Directors



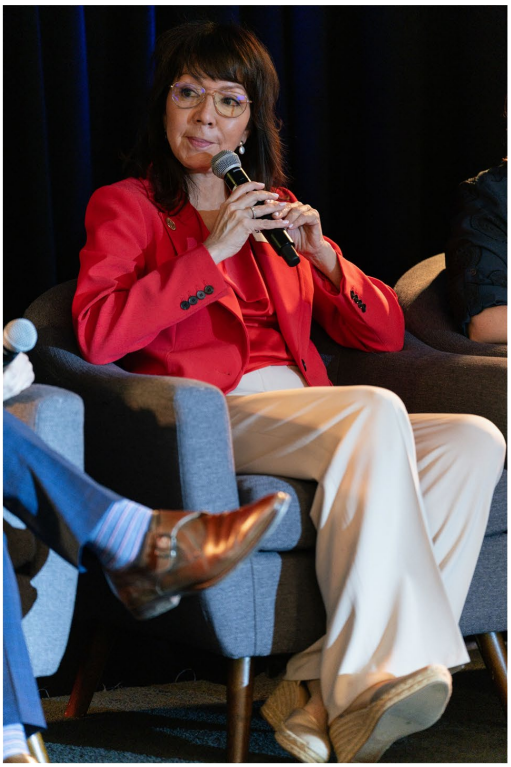
Pedro Azagra



Panel 2: Community Engagement and Investment in the Energy sector



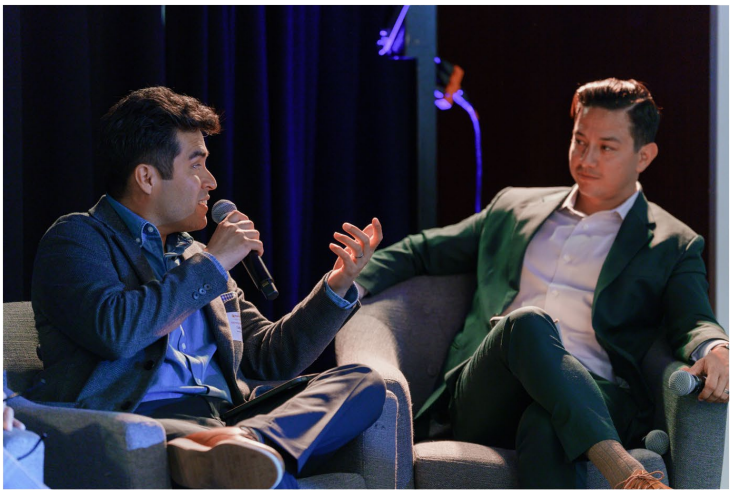
Rep. Henry Cuellar (TX-28)



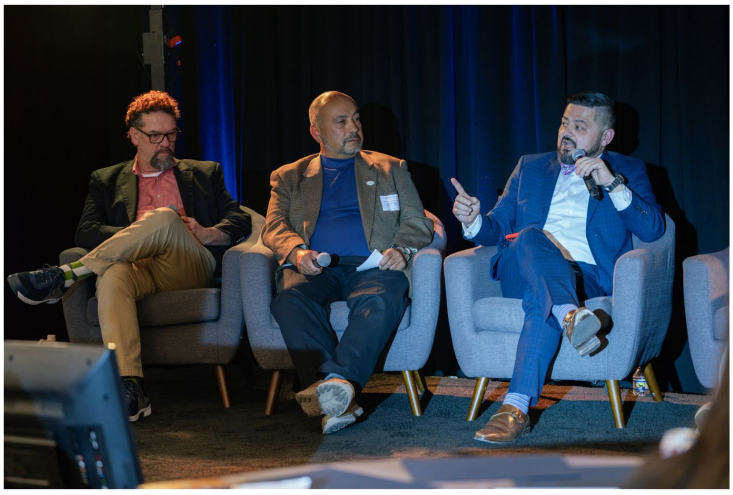
Suzanna Valdez Wolfe

Panel 5: Energy Supply Chains:
Expanding Opportunities for Hispanic-Owned Businesses

Missy Henriksen



Gabriel Chavez, Zack Valdez, Ph.D.



Panel 6: Building a Workforce That Delivers:
Apprenticeships, Credentials, and the Jobs-to-Projects Pipeline

Maria Pia Tamburri

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President & CEO
Constellation Energy

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Executive Assistant

Flor Guerra
Director of Events

Frederick Pfaeffle Arana
Sr. Legal Advisor

Lori Woolworth
Senior Accountant

Zack Valdez, Ph.D.
Advanced Manufacturing Advisor

HIE State Chapters

Hispanics in Energy's growing network of State Chapters extends our mission at the local level, fostering leadership development, industry engagement, and community impact across the United States and Puerto Rico.

Current HIE Chapters

- Puerto Rico
- Texas
- Virginia

For more information about HIE National and our State Chapters, please visit Hispanics In Energy.

Click here for links to highlight clips, photos, and a detailed report of the 2026 Energy Legislative Summit