

Statement of
David M. Turk
Nominee for the Position of
Deputy Secretary of the United States Department of Energy
Before the
Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
United States Senate
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Chairman Manchin, Ranking Member Barrasso, and distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you.

It is a distinct honor to have my nomination considered by a Committee that has such a proven record of bipartisan accomplishments. This includes, most recently, the groundbreaking Energy Act of 2020, which included 29 bipartisan bills thanks to the leadership of Senators Murkowski and Manchin. Last year also saw passage of Senator Barrasso's very important HFC bill.

To introduce myself, I will focus on five formative experiences in my life that, should I be honoured enough to be confirmed, I would take with me as Deputy Secretary of Energy:

First, I grew up in a small Midwestern, rust-belt town that I suspect most of you have never heard of: Rock Falls, Illinois. The largest employer in Rock Falls was the local steel mill. Throughout my childhood, "The Mill" – which is what all of us simply referred to it – laid off more-and-more workers. Through no fault of their own and because of forces larger than they could control, workers' steady pay checks were no longer steady, families were thrown into disarray, and our entire community was left to fend for itself.

Second, in high school I was selected to represent my State of Illinois at a Department of Energy summer program at Brookhaven National Lab. From this every first experience, I could tell the Department was a special organization. This first impression was reinforced many years later when I became a full-time Department employee in 2014. Each and every day, I was able to witness the incredible talent, dedication, and passion of professionals working to better the lives of fellow Americans.

Third, my first job in DC was working for Senator Kent Conrad, who instilled in his team a laser-like focus to help his fellow North Dakotans. Whether it was ensuring bus service to Medora, protecting against flooding from Devils Lake, or providing enough doctors to serve rural communities throughout the State, I saw first-hand how passionate public service can make a real difference in real peoples' lives.

Fourth, I had the privilege to serve as a Special Assistant to the President on the National Security Council. My role was to coordinate national security efforts between Congress and the Executive Branch. As Senior Director for Legislative Affairs, I worked with all of our national security agencies and provided advice to National Security Council decision-making. Through this experience, I learned that America is always stronger when Article I and Article II work together.

Fifth, and most recently, I have served as Deputy Executive Director of the International Energy Agency. In this role, I have had management responsibilities across the IEA and an unparalleled opportunity to analyze all fuels and all energy technologies across the entire world. I learned that being a successful Deputy means both supporting your leader and lifting up the work of everyone else. A Deputy needs to make the trains run on time and to assiduously follow through.

If I am confirmed, I will bring all of these experiences to the job of Deputy Secretary of Energy, as well as a sense of humility, diligence, and teamwork.

When one looks at the expansive portfolio of the Department and its 110,000 employees – from nuclear weapons to incredibly complex clean-up projects; from cutting-edge science to providing clean, affordable, and reliable energy solutions for all Americans – the Department of Energy can at first look like a Frankenstein’s monster.

But, I would argue there’s a clear thread throughout. The Department – including its 17 National Laboratories – is where our country turns for solutions to our toughest problems. Let me elaborate on this critical role as America’s “solutions catalyst”:

- The Department must maintain a safe, secure, and reliable nuclear stockpile; fuel our nuclear Navy; prevent nuclear weapons proliferation and the threat of nuclear terrorism; and clean up waste from our nuclear weapons programs of the past.
- The Department has been and must remain the scientific powerhouse of the world. For the U.S. to successfully deal with the challenges of today and tomorrow, we absolutely need to fully leverage all of the Department’s capabilities.
- The Department must be an indispensable solutions catalyst for us to successfully defeat climate change, one of the most daunting challenges ever facing humanity. The Department’s efforts are critical to help develop a full range of clean, affordable, secure, and resilient energy technologies for us to reach net zero emissions in just a few short decades. Companies, entrepreneurs, investors, and workers will take solutions to scale, but the Department of Energy can be an indispensable partner.
- Finally, the Department needs to be focused like never before to help communities in transition. We must ensure we don’t again leave towns like Rock Falls, Illinois, alone without the support to succeed well into the future. The American people don’t want hand-outs or empty promises. They deserve real-world opportunities and a fair chance to succeed. Coming from a humble background, I have been blessed with the support of my parents, my wife, teachers, mentors, and the broader community to have had such wonderful career opportunities. We can and must do better for all our American neighbors.

I firmly believe that the greatest country in the history of the world can solve climate change, Build Back Better, outcompete others, and leave no workers and no communities behind. And we must do all of these at the same time.

For the Department to be successful, it needs the type of bipartisan leadership you all have shown in the Energy Act of 2020. If confirmed, I look forward to being a partner with each of you as you seek to serve your constituents and communities.

Thank you again for giving me the opportunity to appear before you today. I look forward to your questions and to doing everything I can to help.