

STATEMENT of WILLIE L. PHILLIPS, JR.  
Chairman  
Public Service Commission of the District of Columbia  
Nominee to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission  
before the  
Energy and Natural Resources Committee  
United States Senate

October 19, 2021

Thank you, Chairman Manchin, Ranking Member Barrasso, and members of the Committee. I am honored to appear before you this morning as a nominee to serve on the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC).

I would like to thank President Biden for nominating me and for his confidence in my ability to serve as a commissioner. I would also like to thank Chairman Manchin and Majority Leader Schumer for their leadership and commitment to having a full complement of Commissioners at FERC. Having been a regulator in the District of Columbia for over six years, and a FERC practitioner for much of my legal career, it is the highest honor to be considered for this position.

To my wife, Gabrielle, who is in attendance today, and to our young children, Peyton and Tripp, your unwavering support is unmatched. I also want to recognize my mother, Ruby, and my sister, Lynn, who are watching from Alabama with my very, very large extended family.

I cannot forget my dear friends and colleagues in the District of Columbia, Mayor Bowser, Councilmember McDuffie, and especially the devoted staff of the DC Public Service Commission (DCPSC). I thank you all for empowering me to continue this journey to serve the nation's capital and the nation.

Lastly, I want to acknowledge my fellow state commissioners, who have entrusted me to serve in leadership roles at the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC), the Organization of PJM States, the EPRI Advisory Council, and, most recently, as President of the Mid-Atlantic Council of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (MACRUC). Your professionalism and commitment to public service continue to inspire me.

Perhaps E. Urner Goodman said it best – *“For he who serves his fellows, is, of all his fellows, greatest.”* Since I was a young boy, I have believed in the values of servant leadership. It is in this spirit that I intend to serve as a FERC Commissioner.

It is through my lived experiences – growing up in rural Alabama, attending the University of Montevallo, studying law at Howard University, working in private practice, and serving as a regulator – that I have come to believe that there are three primary goals of a utility commission: **reliability, affordability, and sustainability.**

The cornerstone of utility service is reliability. Consumers, businesses, and whole industries have to rely on the lights coming on when they flip the switch. I learned that lesson while serving as Assistant General Counsel at the North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC). I worked with some of the sharpest legal minds in the industry to draft reliability standards for the Bulk Power System, including Critical Infrastructure Protection (CIP) standards. I have a keen awareness of the cybersecurity and physical security threats that we face as a nation. And, as the effects of climate change and extreme weather increasingly challenge the reliability of our grid, it is imperative that we work to ensure that our nation’s energy infrastructure is resilient. Reliability depends on our vigilance against these threats.

Like the millions of Americans who have faced financial hardship in the wake of the COVID-19 global pandemic, I have first-hand knowledge of the importance of affordable energy. I watched my own mother and grandmother do back-breaking labor in Alabama, earning barely enough to scrape by. Only to then witness the monthly ritual of spreading the bills out on our dining room table, hoping that there would be enough to cover all our family expenses. And utilities did not always make the cut in my household. So, it is never far from my mind that there are those who depend upon regulators to assure that energy services are provided efficiently, at the lowest possible, reasonable rate.

However, as a regulator, I know that the public interest drives the work of the Commission. It demands that we work with an eye toward ensuring a reliable energy grid for today, and a resilient energy grid for the future, one that can meet the challenges of climate change. That is why I am proud of the work that we have done at the DCPSC to modernize the energy delivery system in the District, with a focus on public engagement, equity and environmental justice. If confirmed to the Commission, these will remain priorities of mine.

By balancing these three guiding principles, and considering the arguments and positions of all the parties to a proceeding, I would strive to fulfill the mission of FERC. And, if confirmed, I stand ready to work with all of my fellow commissioners and FERC staff to do so, in a reliable, affordable, and sustainable manner.

Once again, I thank you for the opportunity to appear before this Committee, and I look forward to answering your questions.