

OPENING STATEMENT of MARK C. CHRISTIE
Chairman
Virginia State Corporation Commission
Nominee for Federal Energy Regulation Commission
Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC
September 16, 2020

Chairman Murkowski, Ranking Member Manchin, members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to be considered for the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. It is an honor to be here.

I also want to thank the President of the United States for providing me this opportunity to continue serving the public on a national level as I have done for many years at the state level.

Thanking the many people who have helped me reach this point would take far too much time, but I would like to thank some very important ones.

First, I want to thank my wife Anita, who is here with me. She is my best friend and life partner in all ways.

Next, I want to thank my fellow commissioners on the Virginia State Corporation Commission and all the staff of the Virginia SCC who have served with me since I joined in 2004. When my nomination was announced I said to our staff that I did not regard this nomination as a personal recognition, but rather a recognition of the national stature and respect earned by the Virginia State Corporation Commission over its many years of defending the public interest.

Lastly, I want to thank my fellow state commissioners around the country, with whom I have interacted through organizations such as NARUC and the Organization of PJM States. From my peer regulators I have learned that among the states there are many commonalities, but also that each state is unique and has different needs and approaches. I have always agreed with Justice Brandeis that states are the laboratories of democracy and should be respected as such.

For more than 16 years I have served as a state utilities regulator. That record is public and I am proud of it

In Virginia our legislature elects members of our commission and I have been honored to be elected three times, each time on a bipartisan basis.

The Virginia SCC is an *independent, nonpartisan* commission. So I know from experience how important independence is to making good decisions in the public interest. FERC is also independent and -- if you honor me with confirmation -- I will absolutely respect and defend that independence at the federal level as I have done at the state level.

Finally, I would like to describe briefly what I believe are the major roles of a regulatory agency, based on my experience both as a practitioner and as a teacher of regulation.

An agency such as FERC has three essential roles:

First, is what I would call the *statutory* role. And that is to follow the law in each and every case. FERC has only the authority that has been delegated to it by Congress.

Statutes often contain language that is sometimes very specific and at other times much broader. So where the law does give discretion, my belief is that an agency should be deeply sensitive to the impacts of its decisions on consumers. As a state regulator, I am intensely aware that while FERC does not regulate retail rates what FERC does *affects* retail rates. And with millions of Americans struggling to pay their bills, FERC should always be sensitive to costs to consumers as it fulfills its duty to ensure the reliable power supply that is essential to modern life and jobs for Americans.

The second role of a regulatory agency is to *inform and advise*. FERC has a tremendous amount of special expertise that can inform and advise legislators and policy-makers about policy choices when asked.

The third role of a regulatory agency is a duty to *inform the public* of the true costs and benefits of public policies. The public has a right to know the realistic costs that it will be forced to pay -- and the realistic benefits it can expect -- of policies within that agency's area of expertise.

Again, thank you for this honor and I look forward to your questions.