



Opening Statement
Nominations Hearing for Brouillette, Chatterjee, and Powelson
Chairman Lisa Murkowski
May 25, 2017

Good morning and welcome, everyone. The Committee will come to order.

We are here this morning to consider three nominations: Dan Brouillette to be Deputy Secretary of Energy, and Neil Chatterjee and Robert Powelson to be Members of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

I want to welcome all three nominees to the Committee and thank them for their willingness to serve our country. To start, we will hear introductions from Majority Leader McConnell, Senator Cornyn, and Senator Toomey, who have come to provide introductions and speak to the nominees' qualifications.

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Thank you for those introductions. The nominees can take their seats at the table. I will make my statement and Sen. Franken will make his. We will then swear in each of you and hear your testimony, including introductions of family members.

This is a critical hearing, because it is a significant step towards restoring a crucial independent commission to functionality. FERC has been operating without a quorum since February 3 for two reasons: first, President Obama's failure to nominate anyone for the two Republican seats that were vacated in 2015 and 2016, and also former Commissioner Norman Bay's decision to abruptly resign from his term in February, well before it was scheduled to end. As a result of those two factors, this is the first time in 40 years that FERC has lacked a quorum. And according to Bloomberg, up to \$50 billion in projects are now at risk.

We need to move quickly to restore FERC's ability to do its important work. If we care about the business of a critical independent expert agency, we need a fully functioning commission. And that's why I am pleased that we are able to hold a hearing featuring two qualified nominees.

Our first nominee, Neil Chatterjee, is well-known to all of us here on the dais. As I mentioned he has been instrumental here with the committee, helping us on energy-related matters—he is a first-rate energy professional. Almost all of us have worked with him on bills that drew bipartisan support and passed the Senate, in part because of his efforts and guidance. Neil is known to consider all points of view and has repeatedly brought decision makers with distinct

perspectives together. And I think we heard that just now from the Majority Leader. I have worked with him for five years, I am pleased to support his nomination, and believe his approach will serve him well on the Commission.

Our second nominee, Robert Powelson, has been a leader on the Public Utility Commission of Pennsylvania for years and is now the President of the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners. His colleagues, including several of my friends from Alaska, have recognized his leadership, and shared their support for his confirmation to FERC. I likewise support Mr. Powelson's nomination.

Our third nominee is Dan Brouillette. This will be his second turn at the Department of Energy, having served as Assistant Secretary for Congressional and Intergovernmental Affairs from 2001 to 2003. Following his time at DOE, he served as the Staff Director of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, Vice President of Ford, and is currently Senior Vice President at USAA. He is well-qualified for the role of Deputy Secretary, he has the confidence of Secretary Perry, and he will be a capable partner at the Department.

Now, all of us are well aware that the President's budget request proposes significant cuts to basic research and applied energy programs, along with the elimination of certain programs that have proven to be effective for accelerating innovation.

And while Mr. Brouillette will play a significant role in developing and implementing any changes that are made at DOE, we should remember that the budget request was written without him. I don't agree with everything in it, and questions about his views and priorities are certainly fair this morning, but it will not do us much good to try to hold Mr. Brouillette personally accountable for the budget proposal, or to try to delay his confirmation based on it.

For members who have questions for our nominees, I will be here for as long as possible this morning. Should members have additional questions after the hearing; any questions for the record will be due at the close of business today. And, finally, I would advise members to be prepared to report these nominees, as well as the nomination of Mr. Bernhardt to be Deputy Secretary of the Interior, right after we come back from our state work period after this next week.

With that, I will now turn to Sen. Franken, thank him for filling in this morning on this very important hearing. I appreciate your comments this morning as well.

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