

**Statement of
Neil G. McBride
Nominee to the Tennessee Valley Authority Board of Directors
Before the
U. S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works
February 10, 2010**

Madam Chair, ranking member Inhofe and members of the Committee, thank you for your consideration of my nomination to the Tennessee Valley Authority Board of Directors. I am honored and humbled to be considered for this position.

TVA and its role in the development of the Tennessee Valley have captured my imagination for many years. You may recall that a recent Ken Burns documentary called our national parks “America’s best idea.” I have always believed that TVA is also one of our best ideas. The creation of an agency that would turn America’s industrial, engineering and organizational talent to the benefit of one of the poorest regions of our country is still an important and inspiring commitment.

On a more personal level, I have had several connections with TVA and the idea it represents. One of my vivid childhood memories was going out to the construction site of the Dalles Dam in Oregon with my father, who was an engineer with the Corps of Engineers District Office in Portland. My brothers and I jumped across the Columbia River, which was about a foot wide. As I grew up, I saw firsthand and gained respect for the kind of engineering and organizational accomplishments that are part of TVA’s history. I respect the men and women who make that accomplishment possible.

My wife worked for TVA in Norris, Tennessee. I have known many outstanding TVA employees who are still inspired by its founding ideals. My family enjoyed TVA’s lakes and wilderness areas. My son and I have often canoed the white water rivers it maintains. I know many people who work for businesses and industries that came to the Valley because of these natural attractions and because of the affordable and reliable electric power TVA offers.

Finally, for more than 30 years I have lived with, worked among and advocated on behalf of the people who have benefited the most from and been affected the most by TVA – the people of East Tennessee’s Appalachian coal fields. They benefit from TVA’s success in programs such as power production and flood control. Some of them, as this committee learned from the Roane County residents who came before you last year, are deeply affected when TVA’s activities do not succeed.

I hope that this personal and professional experience would bring a useful perspective to the board. If I am confirmed, I would try to be guided by four principles.

First, that the board’s primary obligation is to assure a reliable supply of fairly-priced electric power for the people, businesses and industries of the Valley.

Second, that the board should continue to support the efforts by CEO Tom Kilgore and his staff to ensure that each one of TVA's managers and employees understands the importance of all four of TVA's missions – electric power production, environmental stewardship, water management and economic development. Managers and employees should not just promote the one mission they happen to work with.

Third, that the board should promote accountability and transparency, in its own work and that of the agency.

The final principle is one I was reminded of when I recently visited TVA's Bull Run Steam Plant, a few miles from my home. The plant's visitor overlook has an historical marker, just like the ones you'd find in a national park. Across the bottom of the marker, in big steel letters, are the words, "Built for the People of the United States of America." I would challenge the board and the staff to ensure that the people of the Valley and the nation benefit from the programs and idea of this important and unique American institution.

I look forward to answering any questions you might have.