

Statement of Virginia T. Lodge
Nominee to the Tennessee Valley Authority Board of Directors
U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works
November 13, 2014

Good morning, Chairman Boxer, Ranking Member Vitter, and distinguished members of the Committee. I am honored to have been nominated by President Obama to serve on the Tennessee Valley Authority Board of Directors

When I moved to Tennessee, thirty-six years ago, I knew little about TVA other than from history and government classes. What I learned quickly was how crucially important it was and is to the region. There is almost no one from the region, my generation and older, who doesn't have a vivid memory of TVA lines being run to their home or business and the life changing effect it had. My mother-in-law's family lives in the small town of Gold Hill, Alabama in Chambers County. My father-in-law's family lives and runs a cast iron foundry in another small town, South Pittsburg, Tennessee. It would be impossible to overstate the important role that TVA has held and continues to hold in their worlds.

Being Commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Human Services for eight years gave me valuable experience in the complexities of operating a large, public entity. Perhaps at least as valuable was the experience of travelling to all ninety-five counties in Tennessee visiting the DHS offices and meeting with local business and community leaders. Much like our sister states in the region, these communities spoke of the need for economic development, the need for jobs and the need to keep electricity rates low both to attract business and to help the poor ,especially the elderly, disabled and young children. We worked with TVA on weatherization and LIHEAP projects which made dramatic improvements in the lives of our neediest citizens. The greatest reward of being a Commissioner is the ability to effect changes in public policy to improve the lives of our citizens and their communities. Should I be confirmed, serving on the TVA Board would offer that same benefit.

Since leaving State government, I have had the opportunity to gain experience in the corporate sector. I was brought in to my current company, FSI, as it was struggling to survive. There had not been strategic planning to guide the development and operation in the way that successful businesses require. We were able to turn the company around, make it profitable and continue to grow it. I learned in both government and private business that the cornerstone for success is to gather good and unbiased data, set clear goals, and use the data to inform important decisions about what resources will enable you to achieve those goals most effectively.

If confirmed, I pledge to work closely with you, my fellow board members and the staff of TVA to promote TVA's mission to keep rates low, aid in economic development, and work toward addressing environmental issues.

I appreciate your consideration of my nomination and thank you for the opportunity to be with you today.