

Statement of Beth Harwell
Nominee to the Tennessee Valley Authority Board of Directors
U.S. Senate Environment and Public Works Committee
Subcommittee on Clean Air and Nuclear Safety
May 19, 2020

Chairman Braun, Ranking Member Whitehouse and distinguished members of the committee, my name is Beth Harwell, and I have the great honor of being nominated by President Trump to the Tennessee Valley Authority Board of Directors.

As a young girl growing up in Pennsylvania, I became fascinated with the televised Watergate hearings. I would watch them for hours with my grandmother, who lived with us. It was during that time that I became interested in government and public service. Never, though, did I dream that I would one day be sitting before a U.S. Senate committee myself, so it is an honor and privilege to be here today, and I thank you for giving me this opportunity. I also would like to thank Sen. Lamar Alexander and Sen. Marsha Blackburn of my home state of Tennessee for supporting my nomination to the TVA board.

By way of introduction, I have lived in Nashville, Tennessee, since the age of 16 when I moved there to attend college at Lipscomb University. In the following decades, I worked as a faculty member at Belmont College, ran for a seat in the state House, raised a family, served as chair of the Tennessee Republican Party, and ultimately was elected Speaker of the Tennessee House of Representatives.

As Speaker, I worked every day to improve the lives of Tennesseans, very similar to the mission of TVA “to make life better for the people of the Tennessee Valley.” In fact, the three areas of focus of the TVA – energy, environment and economic development – are ones in which I have worked and led on throughout my time in the Tennessee Legislature.

I have traveled our great state many times over, and I have seen firsthand TVA’s impact on counties and cities. I know what it means to residents of a rural county in West Tennessee to land a new business with TVA’s assistance. For many years, my family and I have enjoyed boating on TVA lakes, thanks to TVA’s commitment to clean and safe water. I have attended meetings at TVA’s headquarters and always came away with a greater understanding of and appreciation for the scope of the organization’s work. With my deep knowledge of state government and an extensive network of contacts across Tennessee and in other TVA states, I am confident I could be helpful in the board’s work.

Before closing, I would like to pivot to one other point that I think is important for you to know.

At my core, I am a fiscal conservative. I firmly believe that strong fiscal management is a path to investment and opportunities. As speaker, I presided over eight consecutive balanced budgets. When we discovered that our pension plan was not financially sustainable, we reformed the system, and today, the Tennessee Consolidated Retirement System is regarded as one of the healthiest pension plans in the nation.

I share these examples with you because I will bring that same sense of fiscal responsibility to my work as a TVA board member. The 10 million people in the Tennessee Valley should expect and deserve no less from their TVA board members.

TVA plays an important role in the states in which it operates, and I would be grateful for the opportunity to work with other board members to advance its work during these challenging times.

Thank you again for the opportunity to be with you today and for your consideration of my nomination. I am happy to answer any questions.