

Statement of Beth Prichard Geer
Nominee to the Tennessee Valley Authority Board of Directors
Before the
United States Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works
Subcommittee on Clean Air, Climate, and Nuclear Safety

April 6, 2022

Chairman Carper, Ranking Member Capito, Chairman Markey, Ranking Member Inhofe, and distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. My name is Beth Prichard Geer, and I have the great honor of being nominated by President Biden to the Tennessee Valley Authority Board of Directors.

I am a daughter of Tennessee. My family has been in Tennessee for over a century, and we have put down deep roots. One of the reasons we've been able to make Tennessee home is the Tennessee Valley Authority. The TVA gave rise to economic prosperity that allowed my family to build a better life.

For generations, we were reliant on coal. My great-grandparents—farmers like their parents before them—saved their few dollars to travel from my hometown of Alexandria to nearby Brush Creek to buy coal as it came off the train. They'd burn it in the fireplace, use coal oil lamps, and receive coal as Christmas gifts from their children. My family worked hard to make a better life. Their lives changed for the better in the 1930s. That improvement can be tied, in large part, to the reliable and affordable power provided by the TVA.

With more economic opportunities in the region, their children, my grandparents, were able to start a small business, buy a house, and send their children to college. Years later, when my grandfather sold the business, my dad had to make a career transition in mid-life. It was hard on him and my family. Those lessons also remain with me today. As the economy changes today, and as energy sources in the Tennessee Valley shift, I want to make sure people are supported if they too face job transitions. Being sensitive to the impact TVA has on people's lives matters deeply to me. It is not something I take for granted.

I am proud to be from a rural town of 900 in DeKalb County. I'm also proud of how far our small communities have come, and how much further they can go with the assistance of the TVA. It's important to have board members who understand rural regions, for more than 85% of Valley communities are designated as a Rural or Special Opportunity County. More than half of TVA projects in fiscal year 2020 were in these communities, resulting in \$3.8 billion of capital investment and 30,500 jobs in rural areas alone. TVA Economic Development has designed programs tailored to meet the needs of these areas, needs that I know well. Much of a rural town's growth is linked to economic progress and innovation, like in the field of renewable energy.

Renewable energy has long been part of TVA's energy portfolio. Through my work with Vice President Al Gore for most of my adult life and having served as his Chief of Staff since 2012, I have had the

privilege of collaborating with the world's foremost environmental experts, gaining a firsthand view on how different regions and countries approach conservancy, and then bringing that knowledge home. I have extensive policy and outreach experience on climate change and regenerative agriculture and am confident that, if I were to serve as a member of the board, my knowledge and my many contacts at home and abroad, could contribute to the TVA's goal of achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.

The TVA has been essential in helping the region be a national leader in electric vehicle and battery production. Over the last few years, Tennessee has seen about \$11 billion in investments for EVs from Volkswagen AG and GM. Ford Motor Company and South Korean battery maker SK Innovation just announced exciting plans to develop electric car and battery plants in West Tennessee and Kentucky, creating nearly 11,000 jobs. Ford picked the Tennessee Valley in part because of the affordable, reliable, and renewable energy made available by the TVA.

The financial success of renewable energy is something I observe daily in my current work, and it's why the sustainability revolution may now be the most significant investing and business opportunity in the world. Sustainability does not just make sense for our environment; it makes good sense for economic progress.

The TVA's success in supporting a robust economic development policy, creating prosperous communities--both rural and urban--is driven in part by nearly nine decades of innovation, but also by building relationships and by working together.

I have dedicated my life to public service, and central to that service has been my ability to bridge gaps and bring people together. Outside of my career with Vice President Gore and the Clinton-Gore Administration, I have worked in community and investor relations for several private companies and managed communications for Cumberland University in Lebanon, Tennessee. At Cumberland, I was proud to help reconnect the university with its community, which led to a larger student body and more employment opportunities for the area. If confirmed, I will bring that same commitment to the entire Tennessee Valley as a TVA board member.

In closing, let me say that while I have worked in the political realm at many points in my career, I firmly believe that doing what is best for all the people of the Tennessee Valley is what matters, and that is, at the end of the day, a non-partisan issue. The TVA's aim to make our region the best place in the country to live, work, and raise a family is as important to me today as it was to my family before me. The Tennessee Valley matters a lot to me. It is, after all, my home. I appreciate your consideration of my nomination and thank you, once again, for the opportunity. I look forward to answering any questions.