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U.S. Senate Date: Wednesday, October 22, 2025

Committee on Environment
and Public Works

Washington, D.C.

HEARING ON THE NOMINATIONS OF MITCH GRAVES, JEFF HAGOOD, RANDALL JONES, AND ARTHUR GRAHAM TO BE A MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY

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The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:00 a.m. in room 562, Dirksen Senate Office Building, the Honorable Shelley Moore Capito [chairman of the committee] presiding.

Present: Senators Capito, Whitehouse, Wicker, Markey, Kelly, Schiff, Alsobrooks.

Also Present: Senators Blackburn, Hagerty, Tuberville.

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE SHELLEY MOORE CAPITO, A UNITED STATES SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA

Senator Capito. The committee will come to order, and good morning to all of you. We will begin with our opening statements and our introductions. I want to thank everybody for being here.

As Senator Britt said, we will try to keep it under control. And I said, oh, you Southerners, we just love to have a good time. So thank you all for being here.

Today we are going to hear from four nominees, Mitch Graves, Jeff Hagood, Randy Jones, and Art Graham, to serve as members of the TVA's, Authority's, Board of Directors, and it is well past time that we have had this hearing and started to fill up the Board of Directors with great talent. I look forward to learning more about each one of your goals and priorities today.

In 1933, Congress passed the Tennessee Valley Authority Act, which establishes the TVA as a federally-owned public utility to serve the people of the Tennessee Valley across seven southeastern States. The law charges TVA with three primary roles: providing electricity, managing the Tennessee River system, and assisting with economic development efforts.

If confirmed, the nominees before us will be required to support and uphold each of these fundamental responsibilities of TVA, which have served the people of the Tennessee Valley very

well for decades. In particular, I have seen the positive impacts of TVA's economic development efforts in the Appalachian region and hope the nominees will continue to prioritize those activities.

TVA's mission to provide affordable and reliable electricity is no small challenge and vital to the well-being of its customers. Today, TVA is the third largest electricity generator in the United States, providing energy to more than 10 million people and 800,000 businesses across the Tennessee Valley, in partnership with 153 local power companies.

The families and businesses that call the Tennessee Valley home fund TVA's operations through their energy bills, and in return, these customers expect affordable and reliable energy.

The Tennessee Valley is forecasted to, over the next decade, need a dramatic increase of between 30 and 80 percent of its current power generation capacity to meet rising demand. To meet this growing demand, the Board will have to make strategic long term investment decisions to ensure adequate future capacity while maintaining reasonable and affordable electricity bills for its customers. No small task.

However, to move forward with these vital planning and investment decisions, the TVA Board of Directors needs a quorum. Without a quorum, TVA is currently unable to conduct the full range of business necessary to support the people of the

Tennessee Valley. Confirming these nominees to the Board will enable TVA to move forward with planning new power generation capacity, approving large power load applications to support economic development, and other important actions like approving the 2025 Integrated Resource Plan.

Now, turning to our witnesses today. First, we will hear from two nominees that call Tennessee home, Mr. Graves and Mr. Hagood. Mr. Graves is currently the CEO of West Cancer Center and has more than 30 years of experience in healthcare leadership positions. Mr. Graves also serves on the board of Memphis Light, Gas, and Water, of which he is a past chair.

Mr. Hagood is an attorney with a wide range of experiences in business across the legal, athletics, real estate, and agriculture industries.

Next, Mr. Jones of Alabama will deliver his testimony. Mr. Jones is the long-time owner of a highly successful insurance agency, and currently serves on the City of Guntersville's Electric Board.

Finally, we will hear from Mr. Graham from Florida, a chemical engineer by training. He brings 15 years of experience as a member, and three-time chair of the Florida Public Service Commission, and he is a former member of the Board of Directors of the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners.

The diverse backgrounds and experiences these nominees

would bring to the Board will position TVA to make effective long-term decisions. I look forward to hearing more about each nominee's priorities for the Board and how they would work to have a positive impact for the people of the Tennessee Valley.

With that, I will recognize my Ranking Member, our Ranking Member, Senator Whitehouse, for his opening statement and then we will go to introductions.

[The prepared statement of Senator Capito follows:]

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE SHELDON WHITEHOUSE, A UNITED STATES SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

Senator Whitehouse. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Before I get to TVA, I want to discuss permitting reform for a minute. You and I both want permitting reform, as do colleagues on the Democratic and Republican sides. All sorts of interest groups are pitching me on permitting reform. There is a lot to fix, and I am happy to and will continue to engage in these conversations, not just with you but also with our colleagues on the Energy Committee.

But remember what I warn constantly about: trust. Why would we want to do bipartisan permitting reform during an administration that won't faithfully execute that law, that can't be trusted? Trust matters. And the Trump administration is busily destroying any hope of that trust with unrelenting and often illegal assaults on clean energy.

Off my State, they dropped an illegal stop work order on a project nearing completion, with $4 billion invested and every permit in place. Listen to this: when whoever it was at Moscow Central demanded the illegal stop work order, government lawyers had to go into court and reverse arguments they had been making in that same courthouse about that same project, just weeks earlier. The exact opposite arguments.

Of course, they got crushed. But from a trust perspective,

where is the good faith there? It is gangster-gang show quality stuff.

Two weeks ago, Interior canceled environmental review on America's largest solar energy project. The Energy Executive Order contends that solar and wind energy aren't even energy. Even the dictionary is violated.

This is kind of bureaucratic Al Capone quality stuff. So it is very hard to find a glimmer of good faith.

The administration's kill list of clean energy projects starts with projects in Blue States, but just wait, the full list targets Red States as well. They have already pulled the permits in Red States like Lava Ridge Wind in Idaho.

On Monday, Secretary Burgum declared that he had no interest in including offshore wind in a permitting reform proposal. Well, guess what? Unless the illegal acts stop, and unless offshore wind is included, good luck with the trust required for a permitting deal.

And where are my Senate Republican colleagues? It used to be your stated principle that government shouldn't be weaponized, that government shouldn't pick winners and losers, that regulators should be honest and not take private property, and that lawful permits should be honored.

Now, everyone is mute while government is weaponized, picks winners and losers, illegally damages private interests who have

lawful permits, all because what? The picked winner is the fossil fuel industry? Just think about that a moment, when the winds change and your favorite industry isn't the picked winner anymore, do you really want the lawless America, the pay-to-play America of this administration?

The Republican Party has long claimed to be the party of free market capitalism, yet you seem fine with this level of government interference in free enterprise. Stop Work Trump's interference in all these projects isn't just putting thousands of hard-working Americans out of a job, it is raising the cost of capital for all projects, even fossil fuel projects.

Folks, this is what the founding fathers meant when they talked about corruption. When the government comes in and shuts down a lawful project to please its political donors, we are no longer in the United States of America, we are in Venezuela. So, colleagues, I will keep working in good faith on the substance of permitting reform. I promise you that.

But that gate I have said we will need to get through, that trust check, is looking increasingly implausible. Without a drastic change in behavior I am not seeing a pathway to that trust. Without perhaps even some change in personnel, I am not seeing a pathway to that trust.

If that is fine with all of you, well, keep it up. But don't blame me when permitting reform crashes and burns because

all trust, all rule of law, has crashed and burned.

And by the way, if that is lost, that is going to affect highway bills, WRDA bills, all sorts of other legislation that requires trust in the faithful execution of the laws.

On the nominees to govern the TVA, which by statute must maintain national leadership and technological innovation in low-cost power and environmental stewardship, the Trump administration is on course to technological devolution, higher-cost power and environmental destruction with fewer jobs and less accountability but more reward for fossil fuel mega-donors.

If you know how grids work, it is easy to see how reducing clean power requires more expensive polluting units to be dialed up to meet projected demand, especially as demand surges from data centers. That cost increase comes from ratepayer pockets, hammering people's electric bills.

There have been bright spots. In 2024, more than half of TVA's electricity came from zero-carbon sources like nuclear, hydroelectric and renewables. TVA has led the charge on deploying advanced reactors and plans deployment of 10 gigawatts of solar by 2035. It has retired or announced retirement of 86 percent of its polluting, expensive coal fleet. But it has approved nearly 5 gigawatts of new natural gas generation since 2019, without carbon offset or removal.

My question is, will the nominees before us advocate for

TVA's customers or will they roll over for Trump administration schemes to build or extend expensive, polluting fossil plants to help out the big Trump donors at ratepayer expense?

Will Tennessee Valley ratepayers pay the price for that with higher utility bills, medical expenses, and housing and insurance costs as climate change fuels more and more costly disasters?

The nominees appear here under a cloud that is not their own fault. Trump fired three Democratic board members, upending the convention of a bipartisan TVA board, and depriving the board of its quorum. Are Republicans okay with that? How about when the winds change? Political interference to enrich political megadonors is the exact opposite of what is needed to run a proper utility.

A public board, like the TVA board, needs competent visionaries. I will just say that the classic pay-to-play political spoils system has never worked for the public. History shows that. And it could well wreak its havoc on TVA and its 10 million customers.

I look forward to hearing from the nominees whose interests they will put first. Thank you, Madam Chair.

[The prepared statement of Senator Whitehouse follows:]

Senator Capito. Thank you, Senator Whitehouse.

Before I turn to Senator Blackburn, I am going to respond just for one minute on the permitting. In the same symposium on Monday evening where I and Congressman Westerman, from the House side, both reiterated several times that permitting reform has to be agonistic as to what project it is, it doesn't matter if it is a natural gas, coal, wind, solar, to me. If you get the permits and you do the things that you need to do to be permitted, you should move forward no matter what.

You were reminded, if I can say, I think it was Senator Lummis, reminded you yesterday that we feel your pain. The XL Pipeline that was canceled the first day of the Biden administration is a good example of that. So we have mutual pain here. This is why I think we can get permitting reform. But I understand, and I get your message. So thank you.

So, this morning we are joined by Senators Blackburn, maybe Hagerty, and Tuberville, to provide remarks before the committee. We will begin with Senator Blackburn to introduce Mr. Graves and Mr. Hagood, both from Tennessee, nominated to be members of the board of directors of TVA.

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE MARSHA BLACKBURN, A UNITED STATES SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF TENNESSEE

Senator Blackburn. Thank you, Madam Chairman. I am delighted to join you this morning and introduce these two fine Tennesseans.

As you said, Mr. Mitch Graves has served on the board of commissioners of Memphis Light, Gas and Water, we call it MLGW, since 2016. And MLGW is the largest 3-service utility in the Country, and the Tennessee Valley Authority's largest customer.

During his tenure, he has chaired the pension and OPEB funds as well as the hedge, audit and human resource committees, and briefly served as CEO, providing steady leadership in one of Memphis' most critical public institutions. He has over 37 years of executive leadership experience in complex regulated industries.

He currently serves as Chief Executive Officer of the West Cancer and Research Institute, leading a multi-State health care organization with more than 100 providers and 750 employees. Prior to this role, he served as president and CEO of HealthChoice, LLC and held key executive positions at Methodist Le Bonheur Health Care.

His expertise has been recognized nationally through his service on the United Health Care's Executive Advisory Council and Cigna's National Health Care Advisory Council, where he has

provided valuable insight on health care strategy and innovation.

With his deep roots in the Memphis community, decades of executive leadership and steadfast commitment to public service, he represents the best of Tennessee's business and civic leadership. I am confident that his experience and dedication will continue to serve our State and Nation well.

At this time, I would like to introduce Mr. Jeff Hagood, from the small community of Persia, to serve on the TVA board of directors. In addition to his 35-year legal career, Mr. Hagood has built and managed a diverse portfolio of successful businesses across our State.

His business ventures have included many storage facilities, warehouses, urgent care medical clinics, a large trucking operation, residential subdivisions, restaurants, apartments, commercial properties, farm land, and a sports agency. His extensive experience in business and management brings a vital private sector perspective to TVA's leadership.

Beyond his professional accomplishments, he has dedicated much of his life to serving his community. He has served on numerous non-profit boards, mentored children through Big Brothers and Big Sisters for nearly a decade, and for almost 20 years has led his church's shut-in ministry, personally preparing and delivering meals to those unable to leave their

homes. His commitment to service reflects the very values TVA was founded upon.

With his legal expertise, entrepreneurial success, and unwavering commitment to service, Mr. Hagood embodies the values that have long defined the people of the Tennessee Valley. I am confident that his leadership will bring strength, accountability and common sense stewardship to the TVA Board of Directors.

Thank you, Madam Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Senator Blackburn follows:]

Senator Capito. Thank you, Senator Blackburn.

Now I will turn to Senator Hagerty.

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE BILL HAGERTY, A UNITED STATES SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF TENNESSEE

Senator Hagerty. Thank you, Chairman Capito and Ranking Member Whitehouse. I appreciate your holding this important nomination hearing today.

My home State of Tennessee is dependent on the Tennessee Valley Authority for the entirety of our energy supply. While TVA touches a number of other States in the valley, Tennessee has only one option for our vital energy needs, and that is the TVA.

It is my honor to introduce two outstanding Tennesseans, Mitch Graves and Jeff Hagood, who have been nominated by President Trump to serve on the Board of Directors of the Tennessee Valley Authority. Both men bring decades of leadership experience in business, management and community service. You have heard from Senator Blackburn the extent of their experience.

Their proven record of results makes them exceptionally well qualified to help guide TVA at this critical moment in our Nation's energy future.

I would also like to recognize Randy Jones and Art Graham, who, while not from my home State, bring valuable experience, valuable expertise, and valuable perspective that if confirmed, will help advance the Valley's vision for affordable, reliable

energy, regional growth and technical innovation in the years ahead.

But this hearing is about more than the four nominees sitting in front of you. It is about the future of American energy dominance and the transformative role that TVA can play in securing that dominance. The Tennessee Valley Authority is uniquely positioned to lead America's nuclear energy revival and shape the direction of our Country's power generation for the next century. We have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to ensure American energy independence and technical dominance.

The 21st century economy will be powered by artificial intelligence, quantum computing and advanced manufacturing, all of which demand vast amounts of reliable baseload power. The ability to generate that power is critical to ensuring that the United States continues to be the global leader.

And let me be clear: failure in this endeavor is not an option. Nuclear energy is in Tennessee's DNA, and nuclear energy is the solution that can meet our future needs at scale.

TVA is already leading the way. It holds the Nation's only early site permit for a small modular reactor, making it the clear front-runner in America's nuclear resurgence. SMRs are safer, more efficient and more replicable than traditional reactors. Now is the time to deliver.

Unfortunately, TVA's potential has too often been

constrained by bureaucracy and a lack of vision. For too long, the board prioritized process over progress and metrics over mission. But today, we have an opportunity to change that, to empower new leadership that will cut through the red tape and move TVA forward with renewed purpose.

The Trump administration's decisive action to bring fresh leadership to TVA ensures that we can confirm board members who understand the urgency of this moment, leaders who will champion innovation, job creation and energy independence.

Mitch Graves and Jeff Hagood understand the responsibility before them. They recognize that TVA's role in deploying advanced nuclear technologies is central not just to Tennessee's prosperity, but to America's national security and our global competitiveness.

I am confident that under their leadership TVA will act boldly, deliver a clear plan to make TVA the driving force in America's energy and technology future. If TVA succeeds, the United States will lead the world in reliable and scalable energy production. If it fails, we risk ceding that ground to adversaries like China. The stakes could not be higher.

This is America's moment to lead, to enter a new era of innovation that powers our economy, that strengthens our security, and secures a new American golden age. I am proud to support these four qualified nominees to serve on the TVA board

of directors, and I look forward to their swift confirmation.

[The prepared statement of Senator Hagerty follows:]

Senator Capito. Thank you very much. Thank you.

And now we have Senator Tuberville to introduce Mr. Jones of Alabama, who has obviously been nominated to a member of the board of directors of the TVA. Senator Tuberville, thank you for coming. Please proceed.

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE TOMMY TUBERVILLE, A UNITED STATES SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF ALABAMA

Senator Tuberville. Thank you, Madam Chair and Ranking Member. It is my honor to introduce my good friend and fellow Alabamian, Mr. Randy Jones of Guntersville, Alabama, to represent the State of Alabama on the one seat that we have on the TVA board.

Randy is a proud business owner and a civic servant of North Alabama. Over 45 years, he has started his own insurance agency and has grown it substantially over the years, making him a big player in the State of Alabama. For 17 years, Randy has served on the Guntersville Electric Board, where he oversaw a $12.8 million expansion of the system while keeping their debt low, which is very important.

He has also served on the Business Council and Renewal Commission of Alabama and Jacksonville State University's Board of Directors, where he oversaw significant infrastructure and economic development efforts across our State.

Mr. Jones' strong background in business and civil service sets him up to be a valuable board member of the TVA. I am grateful for the hard work he has done so far in Alabama and look forward to working with him on the TVA board.

Thank you for being here today, Randy Jones. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Senator Tuberville follows:]

Senator Capito. Thank you. Thank you all very much.

I would ask the witnesses if they would move to the witness table, nominees, and I will swear you in.

I am going to ask you to stand, to save you the up and down. And raise your right hand, please, and answer the following questions. I will start with Mr. Graves.

Do you swear the testimony you are about to give to this committee is the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

Mr. Graves. Yes, Chairman.

Mr. Hagood. Yes, Chairman.

Mr. Jones. Yes, Chairman.

Mr. Graham. Yes, Chairman.

Senator Capito. Thank you. Let the record show that the witnesses have answered in the affirmative, and so we will now hear from our witnesses. Thank you.

Mr. Graves, when you are ready, everybody is seated, you can proceed with your opening statement. Thank you for being here.

STATEMENT OF JOHN MITCHELL GRAVES, NOMINEE TO THE TENNESSEE VALLEY BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Mr. Graves. Chairman Capito, Ranking Member Whitehouse, and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today and for considering my nomination to the Tennessee Valley Authority's Board of Directors.

For the record, my name is Mitch Graves, and I am a fourth generation Memphian. It is an honor to have been nominated by President Trump to serve an institution that has played such a vital role in the Tennessee Valley for more than 90 years, providing affordable, reliable electricity, fostering economic growth, and protecting the region's natural resources.

I have had personal experience with every aspect of TVA's mission. As a life-long Memphian, I experienced TVA's dam, Pickwick Lake formed from that, and from childhood, fishing with my grandfather to water skiing as a young adult. I have seen first-hand how TVA has played a critical role in my hometown's economic development over the years, bringing jobs and opportunity.

And of course, TVA has provided our citizens with low-cost electricity through our local power company, Memphis Light Gas and Water, better known as MLG&W. Since 2016, I have served on the Board of Commissioners of MLG&W. And as the Senator said earlier, MLG&W is the largest 3-service utility in the Country

and TVA's largest customer, accounting for about 10 percent of its revenue.

I have served as chairman of MLG&W and for a brief time period, interim CEO. During my term as chairman, MLG&W explored alternative suppliers of energy. We developed an Integrated Resource Plan from which then we developed a Request for Proposal. After reviewing numerous options, MLG&W decided against selecting any bids and recommended staying with TVA, a decision that underscores both TVA's value and its importance to Memphis. Throughout that process, TVA stood out thanks to its reliability and low rates.

I also gained a better appreciation of TVA's balanced generation portfolio and how critical that is in keeping the lights on and power bills low. Memphis and the Valley are well served by TVA.

In addition to serving as chairman, I have served as chairman of the MLG&W Pension and OPEB Funds and the chairman of Hedge, Audit, and Human Resource committees. If confirmed, I am pleased to bring my direct governance experience in the public utility sector to the TVA board.

As outlined in the materials I have submitted to the Committee, I have over 37 years of executive leadership experience in complex, regulated environments. In my current role as chief executive officer of West Cancer Center and

Research Institute, I lead a multi-state healthcare organization with 100 providers and 750 employees.

Prior to that, I served as president and CEO of HealthChoice, LLC, and held executive leadership roles at Methodist Le Bonheur Healthcare.

I have had the privilege of serving on many corporate, non-profit, healthcare, and governmental boards, most often in leadership roles. My background in executive management, combined with utility governance and community service, will enable me to provide balanced oversight while helping advance TVA's mission of energy delivery, environmental stewardship, and economic development.

If confirmed, I will uphold the TVA Act and work to ensure that TVA stays true to its mission and continues to meet the needs of families, businesses, and communities across the Valley, not just for today but for generations to come.

I would like to thank Senator Blackburn and Senator Hagerty for being here today and their kind words. I would also like to thank Representative Kustoff, who is in the audience, and Governor Bill Lee, for their support.

There are a few people in the audience I would like to also thank for their support: my wife, Kelly Joan, daughter Caroline, her new husband, Kavon, good friends Mike Keeney, Bill and Robin Orville, and Courtney Smith.

I certainly appreciate all TVA has done for my community and I look forward to giving back, and I look forward to collaborating with you all and answering your questions today.

Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Graves follows:]

Senator Capito. Thank you very much.

Next we will go to Mr. Hagood.

STATEMENT OF LARRY JEFFREY HAGOOD, OF TENNESSEE, TO BE A MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY

Mr. Hagood. Chairman Capito, Ranking Member Whitehouse, and members of this committee, my name is Jeff Hagood, and I sincerely thank you for the opportunity to appear before you.

I was indeed humbled that President Trump nominated me to be on the Tennessee Valley Authority Board of Directors, and I am very grateful to my two Senators, Marsha Blackburn and Bill Hagerty, for their kind words and support.

I was born and raised in Persia, Tennessee, a little hamlet about 65 miles from Knoxville. I was fortunate to be raised in a wonderful home and in a wonderful community. My father, Larry Hagood, was the best man I have ever known. My mother, Doris Hagood, was the best mother anybody could ever have.

My daddy was a rural mail carrier, and he grew tobacco on our little farm to supplement our income. He also founded the Persia Utility District. I saw first-hand what a difference that made in my little community.

My mother worked for TVA as a secretary. I so remember my mother talking about how proud she was to work for TVA and how much she loved her work. My mother's only sister, Virginia, and my mother's little brother, Joe Don, had careers at TVA as well.

Just as TVA was important to my family, it was also important to my community. As a child, I would often peddle my

bicycle down our little rural road, Chalk Level Road, to gaze at those towering smokestacks of the John Sevier Fossil Plant. TVA was more than an employer, it was the economic heartbeat of my little community, offering the best-paying jobs and fueling growth and opportunity.

Today, TVA continues to drive energy production, economic development, and access to natural resources across our region, benefits that remain vital to the communities where I grew up and where I now live. Preserving and enhancing these opportunities should be a priority for all of us who want to serve this region.

Now, my parents had little formal education, but they both understood the value of education and had the expectation that I would be the first in my family to go to college. With their sacrifices, I was. I attended the University of Tennessee and got a degree in an Honors Program, and got my law degree.

Upon graduation, I took an unconventional path for a new lawyer at that time: I opened my own little practice. I made $5,218.00 my first year, and I am happy and thankful to say that both my little firm and I have grown significantly over the past 35 years.

My practice has always focused on litigation, and I have represented people from all walks of life with all kinds of cases. I have represented everyone from top business executives

and athletes to hardworking folks who kept our offices clean and those who provided security for our offices. I think I have treated them all, and I sure hope I did, and their cases, with the same care and with the same zeal.

While I have practiced law full-time for the last 35 years, I have always had a particular interest in business. Since 1990, with the help of partners, I have built and developed mini-storage facilities and storage warehouses, urgent care medical clinics, a large trucking operation, subdivisions, restaurants, apartments, and commercial buildings.

I have purchased and developed farmland, and I co-founded a sports agency that represents many NFL players. I believe my background in business enables me to offer TVA the perspective of not only a businessman, but someone outside of the public utility sector.

I have had to learn personnel management, evaluate personnel, know when and how to raise capital, and when and how to deploy, hire the right people and get the right technology.

TVA has a mission of service, and I align myself with that mission. Throughout my life, I have strived to give back more to my community than I have taken. I have served on the boards of many, many non-profits. I have contributed time, not just money.

For nearly a decade, I went into the worst project in

Knoxville every Monday night and mentored two twins. For 20 years, I have prepared, myself, meals and delivered those for those that are shut in, and led my church's shut-in ministry.

On a personal note, I met my wife, Millicent, at our church. We have been married for six years. We have a three-year-old son. His name is Quinn. Faith and family are the cornerstones of our lives.

I share this background of legal experience, business acumen, service to my community and State, and my appreciation for what TVA has meant to my family and to my community because it demonstrates the values and experiences I would bring to the TVA board if confirmed.

Today, I commit to bringing strong leadership, common sense, and accountability to the people TVA serves. I will never lose sight of the communities like my hometown of Persia, Tennessee, and the common man and the common woman. I will be a voice for the mission and values that were set forth nearly 100 years ago in the founding of the Tennessee Valley Authority.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Hagood follows:]

Senator Capito. Thank you.

Mr. Jones?

STATEMENT OF RANDALL JONES, OF ALABAMA, TO BE A MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY

Mr. Jones. Thank you, Chairman Capito and Ranking Member Whitehouse and members of the committee. It is a privilege to appear before you today, and I am deeply honored to have been nominated by President Trump to serve on the Tennessee Valley Authority Board of Directors.

I want to thank my good friend, Senator Tuberville, for the kind introduction and support. I am also appreciative to have the support from Senator Katie Britt, and my long-time friend and hometown Congressman Robert Aderholt.

Speaking of my home town, Guntersville, Alabama, the Mayor of Guntersville, Leigh Dollar, is here, along with several friends from back home. My wife, Deborah, is also here, and I am appreciative for all their support.

I come before you not only as a 50-year resident of Guntersville, Alabama, but as someone who has seen first-hand the vital role the Tennessee Valley Authority plays in balancing the three Es: energy, environment, and economic sustainability. TVA's original mission was to provide reliable, affordable, and sustainable power, and that mission remains critical today.

I live on the Guntersville Reservoir in Marshall County, Alabama. In 1935, David Lilienthal, a TVA Board Member, addressed a crowd to hopefully alleviate the anxiety of local

farmers and businessmen about the upcoming TVA project, the Guntersville Dam. The meeting was a success and one week later the citizens of Marshall County voted for complete cooperation with the project.

The completion of the dam has been cited as the most important event in the history of Marshall County. On November 6th, 1939, the Birmingham News reported that "Guntersville is having a huge industrial expansion." The reporter quoted the Chamber of Commerce president who stated that power rates in Guntersville were reduced 30 percent because of the dam. Even now, our residential power rates remain 30 percent below those of neighboring providers. And hydroelectricity, the original renewable resource, still supplies about 9 percent of TVA's power.

TVA provides power to over 153 power suppliers who in turn service over 10 million customers. From the largest to the smallest, these local power suppliers embody the standard of safety and service.

I have had the privilege of serving on the City of Guntersville Electric Board since 2000. This is one of the smaller electric companies TVA serves. It has given me a greater understanding of the importance of a strong partnership between TVA and the local power companies, as well as the unique challenges those of us serving small, rural populations face.

Also, for the past 18 years I have served on the board of trustees for Jacksonville State University which is a regional school in northeast Alabama serving over 10,000 students. And for the past six years, I have served as chairman overseeing a budget of over $200 million dollars. In fact, Forbes just named the university as the number one employer domiciled in the State of Alabama.

I have also had the honor to serve on statewide boards over the years appointed by numerous Alabama governors. But the day I became chairman at Jacksonville State I realized that we are responsible to make sure our students' hard-earned tuition dollars are spent wisely to ensure a degree from that university has value. And my driving philosophy, passion, humility, and integrity is in all that we do.

And I want to bring that same philosophy to the TVA Board. Where we can see a ratepayer, and they know we are good stewards of their hard-earned money and that we support them and generations to come.

Living in Guntersville, I witness daily the natural beauty of our reservoirs. Bald eagles and ospreys, once endangered, are now abundant. White pelicans migrate through our waters, and anglers travel from across the Country to fish our lakes, widely considered among the best bass waters in the Country. Protecting this environment is inseparable from protecting our

economy.

Our region in north Alabama is experiencing unprecedented growth. While we welcome high-tech data centers and defense industry growth, we never lose sight of the families who receive a power bill every month, like the grandmother in Asbury, Alabama raising two grandchildren on $800 a month. For her, a 10 percent rate increase on her power bill could mean the difference between a meal or paying her power bill.

Economic sustainability means ensuring that every decision balances opportunity with affordability for the people served.

In closing, the decisions made by TVA today must stand the test of time. These are choices with consequences that will shape our region for the next 100 years.

If confirmed, I am committed to focusing on energy reliability, environmental stewardship, and economic sustainability and ensuring that TVA will continue to fulfill its original mission and improve the lives of generations to come.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Jones follows:]

Senator Capito. Thank you.

Now we will turn to Mr. Graham.

STATEMENT OF ARTHUR GRAHAM, OF FLORIDA, TO BE A MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY

Mr. Graham. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Before I start, I have to say I disagree with something that my colleague, Jeff Hagood, said. I believe my mom and my dad were the number one parents in the world.

[Laughter.]

Mr. Graham. With that being said, Madam Chairwoman, Ranking Member, and members of the committee, I want to thank you for the opportunity to appear before you here today. My name is Art Graham. It is truly an honor and a blessing to have been nominated by the President to serve on the TVA Board of Directors.

In this time of rapid growth, I believe the TVA has an incredible opportunity not just for the Valley but for the Country as a whole.

I want to take a moment to share my life experiences with the Committee. Through my life, I have acquired a set of skills that I will refer to as my tools in my TVA toolbox. I have regulated utilities, both investor-owned and municipals; I have overseen budgets and large organizations; I have managed workforce and safety issues; and I have contributed to the national energy policy.

For 15 years, I have served on the Florida Public Service

Commission, where I regulate utilities for the State of Florida. During this time, I have dealt with issues such as ensuring adequate generation, we have not had any rolling blackouts, storm hardening, grid reliability, and storm recovery, all while keeping rates affordable for families and businesses.

Let me give you some perspective. Since COVID, we have had a residential growth in my State at a rate of 1,200 people per day. That is 1,200 people per day moving to the State of Florida. During that time, we have had seven hurricanes and still managed to keep rates affordable.

On the national level, I have served on the executive committee and the board of directors for NARUC. This is where I heard first-hand lessons learned from my peers throughout the United States.

Prior to the Public Service Commission, I served on the city council and county commission of Jacksonville. This is where I learned to deal with municipal utilities from the 12th largest in the U.S. to one of the smallest. I dealt first-hand with the "not in my back yard," or NIMBY issues, like where do we put the power generation, where do we put the substations, where do we put the poles.

I have managed people and large organizations. I was the chief administrative officer for the PSC for over five years dealing with human resources, personnel management and the daily

operation of a State agency.

For 12 years, I worked in the paper industry, where I learned to deal with unions, OSHA requirements, workforce and production. I can tell you, when the paper machine goes down, it is all hands-on deck just like when the power goes out. I will bring this same sense of urgency and operational knowledge with me to the TVA Board.

I believe the above-mentioned tools and my engineering background makes me an valuable member for the President's team to take the TVA forward.

What future, you may ask? I think the TVA has a key role in supporting rapid growth in the Tennessee Valley. Data centers, manufacturing, and residential growth are coming to the Valley at a pace that will require planning and decisive action.

To be successful, the TVA must focus on expanding generation capacity and not prematurely closing down current generation; expanding into new nuclear technologies; and strengthening transmission to ensure reliability.

In short, I believe true TVA leadership in these areas would not be just great for the Valley, but will also serve as a template for the United States as a whole. And I believe this fits right into the administration's energy policies.

Once again, I thank you for your time, and I hope I can count on your support.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Graham follows:]

Senator Capito. Thank you.

Before we begin questions, I would like, I have three standard questions I want to ask. So I will go down the dais here to get a nod or a response.

Do you agree, if confirmed, to appear before this committee, designated members of this committee, and other appropriate committees of this Congress to provide information subject to appropriate and necessary security protections with respect to your responsibilities? Mr. Graves?

Mr. Graves. Yes, I do, Senator.

Senator Capito. Mr. Hagood?

Mr. Hagood. Yes, I do Senator.

Senator Capito. Thank you. Mr. Jones?

Mr. Jones. Yes, I do, Senator.

Senator Capito. Mr. Graham?

Mr. Graham. Yes, I do, Senator.

Senator Capito. Okay. Do you agree to ensure that testimony, briefings, documents, and electronic and other forms of communication of information are provided to this committee, its staff and other appropriate committees in a timely manner?

Mr. Graves. Yes, I do, Senator.

Senator Capito. Mr. Hagood?

Mr. Hagood. Yes, I do Senator.

Senator Capito. Thank you. Mr. Jones?

Mr. Jones. Yes, I do, Senator.

Senator Capito. Mr. Graham?

Mr. Graham. Yes.

Senator Capito. Thank you.

Finally, do you know of any matters which may or may not have been disclosed that may place you in a conflict of interest if you are confirmed?

Mr. Graves. I do not, Senator.

Senator Capito. Thank you. Mr. Hagood?

Mr. Hagood. I do not, Chairman.

Senator Capito. Thank you.

Mr. Jones. No, Chairman.

Senator Capito. Mr. Graham?

Mr. Graham. I do not.

Senator Capito. All right, thank you very much.

So, I am going to ask a question here, and I am going to, number one, I think all of your opening statements were really, really good. And I thank the families and friends and others who are here in support of you. Because I know filling out the forms and being able to meet all the standards is no picnic here.

So you have had a long trek to get here, and we appreciate it, and I know the support that others offer you is very valuable. So thank you for that.

So the Tennessee Valley power demand, I mentioned this in my opening statement, is projected to grow in the coming years. TVA's draft Integrated Resource Plan anticipates 26 gigawatts of new baseload energy generation capacity is needed over the next decade to ensure system reliability.

So, two questions. What do you see as the primary challenges to TVA providing affordable, reliable energy, and how would you work to address those challenges? I will start with Mr. Graves.

Mr. Graves. Thank you for the question, Senator. You are right, the grid growth needs to happen, especially with AI and other things being added to the system.

I think the Integrated Resource Plan is a critical tool to understanding what that demand is going to look like and what the portfolio should look like to be able to deliver that power. When I was at MLG&W, we did an integrated resource plan as well.

So, the affordability, that is the core mission of TVA, is to provide affordable, reliable electricity. So that has to be at the core of how we look at that.

I do think nuclear power is going to have to play an extremely important part, and that is a costly venture to go into. So there are things we will have to look at as a board of how we fund that going forward.

Senator Capito. Right. Thank you.

Mr. Hagood?

Mr. Hagood. Yes, Senator. Thank you for that question.

I agree in large part with my colleague. Our best hope is nuclear. I am bullish that the new SMR technology, it has been around for a while, it gives me opportunity for hope. It is clear and I am hopeful about that.

The IRP that my colleague just mentioned is a critical thing that we are going to have to tackle as a board, if confirmed. That is a very, very critical thing.

Senator Capito. Thank you.

Mr. Jones?

Mr. Jones. Yes, Senator. If confirmed, I will commit to continue looking to carbon-free future technology and also increase the hydropower and the nuclear, which on the nuclear end of it, we need a sense of urgency.

Senator Capito. All right. Mr. Graham? Did you have a comment on what the problems might be to -- how are we going to get to these exponential gigawatts that we need to at the TVA? You have probably dealt with this in Florida. What are the stumbling blocks? If you have a comment on that.

Mr. Graham. Thank you, Chairman. I think number one is to make sure that the numbers that people are talking about are legitimate. Is this a pipe dream, or is this actually going to come true? I believe it is, but --

Senator Capito. Do you mean on the gigawatt side, do we really need all of that?

Mr. Graham. Yes.

Senator Capito. Okay.

Mr. Graham. Yes. I think that needs to be verified and make sure that we have dotted our Is and crossed our Ts.

I think the biggest opportunity, as some of my colleagues have said, is going to be nuclear, especially the SMRs. I think that is one of the things I am mostly excited about being on the TVA, because I think we have the opportunity to make that happen and try to make it happen as quick as we can. I think once we have done that, then we can use that as the template for everything else.

I have seen what happened in Georgia with Vogtle, and how long that took. It went $16 billion over budget and it took an extra six years. Nobody wants to be the next one going down that path.

Senator Capito. Right.

Mr. Graham. So I think SMRs is going to be the solution to that. I think TVA is in a position to be on top of that and have that sense of urgency to move forward with it.

Senator Capito. Thank you.

I am going to start with you this time. On economic development, I am particularly interested in this aspect of it,

being an Appalachian myself, not served by the TVA but some very similar regions and pockets of our States that still haven't developed.

How do you see TVA being able to continue that mission but maybe change the mission, change the way the mission is delivered maybe for those remaining areas of the TVA Authority's area that have yet to be touched and being able to be a beneficiary of the economic development opportunities?

Mr. Graham. Thank you, Senator, for that question. I think personally, TVA is primed for growth, is primed for opportunity.

I have come from manufacturing, I have had several years working in paper mills, several years working around power boilers. I think the main thing you are going to need, you are going to need land, you are going to need access to water. I think TVA and the Valley area has an abundance of that.

And I think you could bring in opportunities that maybe can't fit other places, that won't fit in New York City, that won't fit some places in Miami, that sort of thing. I think it is just a matter of making sure you chase after the right industries that fit in those locations.

I can tell you, being in Jacksonville, we are a very pro-military town and we have a lot of blue-collar people that put in their 20 years and are looking for something to do

afterwards. And we used to argue all the time, do we chase after Google or Microsoft, or do we chase after some of these manufacturing outfits? Because we have the workforce there that can come in, go to work every single day and do the job. They have already proved it by serving our Country for 20 years.

Senator Capito. Thank you.

Mr. Jones?

Mr. Jones. Thank you for that question. It is near and dear to my heart, living in Guntersville, Alabama, being in a rural area, knowing what it takes to run a power line out to a mobile home that is a quarter mile off the main road, and making sure they have sustainable, affordable power and that those folks are taken care of.

And at the same time, partnering with the local power companies. And weatherization, the solar programs on rooftops, working that way right there and the partnering, I think, with the local power companies is very important as far as the economy and economic growth.

Senator Capito. Thank you.

Mr. Hagood?

Mr. Hagood. Thank you for that question.

Senator, when I heard you ask that question, I couldn't help but think about broadband. Broadband was not, of course, in the TVA Act of 1933. TVA is not in the broadband business.

But TVA ought to do everything that they can to help local telecoms and the local power providers, make that happen, particularly in the rural areas, which I grew up in a rural area. It is very near and dear to my heart.

Senator Capito. I agree with that wholeheartedly.

Mr. Graves?

Mr. Graves. Thank you, Senator. The TVA Act was for rural communities, and to serve them not just with electricity but bring economic development to those areas. We see that happening today in the Tennessee Valley. A great example is the BlueOval, the Ford plant in Brownsville, Tennessee, which is a rural community, that has brought jobs and economic development.

So I don't think it is changing the mission; I think it is refocusing back on our original mission. Thank you.

Senator Capito. Thank you.

Mr. Whitehouse?

Senator Whitehouse. Senator Kelly is here under a bit of a time crunch. So if the Chairman will permit, I will let him go ahead.

Senator Capito. Oh, sure. Senator Kelly, go forward.

Senator Kelly. Thank you, Madam Chair, thank you, Senator Whitehouse and thank you to all the nominees for being here today. It was nice to see you all in my office yesterday. I wanted to talk about one of the topics we discussed in that

meeting, which is the data center construction across the Country.

My understanding is that TVA, that region uses about 17,000 megawatt hours of energy on an hourly basis right now. But some reports indicate that the TVA region is seeing demand from data centers that could add an additional 11,000 megawatt hours to what is currently being used.

While acknowledging that these estimates may be bullish, we can reasonably expect that the region will need to significantly increase the amount of power that it produces and the energy it consumes.

I recently put out a policy framework called AI for America, which argues that utilities need to make sure that the cost of adding new generation capacity is borne by these large power users, not families and not small businesses who sometimes have to struggle to pay their utility bills. This could include innovative power purchase agreements that better account for up-front costs and encourages long-term investments to make our aging grid more resilient.

So I would like to hear from each of you on this. How would you handle the unprecedented demand from data centers in the TVA region and how will you protect ratepayers; how would you protect them from rate hikes caused by the increased demand?

We will start with Mr. Graves.

Mr. Graves. Thank you for that question, Senator.

One hundred percent agree with you. It cannot be on the back of ratepayers. I come from Memphis, Tennessee. We have an extremely high poverty level. Loading on more utility expense to the backs of their paycheck is just not doable.

I do agree with you, power purchase agreements are something that this board will need to look at. Again, AI is out of the bag. It is not going back in. So we have to figure out how to deal with that, and the energy demands for that.

Thank you.

Senator Kelly. Mr. Hagood?

Mr. Hagood. Thank you, Senator, for that question. I certainly enjoyed the few minutes with you yesterday. Thank you for that.

I totally agree; costs should not be borne by large corporations and passed onto the back of our ratepayers. I am on the other end of the State from my colleague here to my right. But I grew up in a very rural area. That is a very important issue to me, and thank you for that question.

Senator Kelly. Mr. Jones?

Mr. Jones. Thank you, and I enjoyed time with you yesterday. On the data centers, that is all we are hearing about now, data centers everywhere. However, when they come in, what is it going to cost to supply the power for that? And what

if they leave five years from now and we are left holding the bag?

So there has to be a partnership, through bonds, or a bond for them to say, hey, if you are not here longer than 20 years, you are going to pay for this power, because we cannot put it on the backs of the grandmother in Asbury, Alabama, that is trying to feed two children.

Senator Kelly. And Mr. Graham?

Mr. Graham. Thank you, Senator. In observance of the time, I agree with my colleagues. We have something we call cost causation. Basically the cost causer is the one that has to support all that cost. We have to figure out an effective way of making sure that happens.

Senator Kelly. Do each of you agree that maybe we should consider a separate rate class for data centers?

Mr. Graves. Thank you for the question, Senator. I think that is something that the board would explore in the future.

Senator Kelly. Okay.

Mr. Hagood. Senator, thank you for that question. I think that is very worthy of consideration. If confirmed, I certainly would look into that and be happy to report back to you about that.

Senator Kelly. Mr. Jones?

Mr. Jones. Absolutely a different rate class, but at the

same time, I hope that the data centers pay for their own power that they have provided themselves.

Senator Kelly. All right. Then finally, this unprecedented demand for new energy, and it is significant, we might have to double, in Maricopa County, the amount available. I think we need an approach that looks at all available, most available options. Some gas, nuclear, hydropower, and renewables, certainly, like solar and wind.

So quickly, in the remaining time, do each of you feel that we should consider renewable energy, like solar, wind, battery storage, as part of the solution?

Mr. Graves. Thank you for the question, Senator. Yes, I think we have to look at all energy generation. We aren't going to have any option but to look at everything.

Senator Kelly. Mr. Hagood?

Mr. Hagood. Yes, Senator, thank you. Everything should be on the table.

Senator Kelly. Right. Mr. Jones?

Mr. Jones. Absolutely, yes, sir.

Senator Kelly. Mr. Graham?

Mr. Graham. Yes, Senator, I think a diverse grid is a resilient grid. So I agree.

Senator Kelly. All right. Thank you all, and thank you, Madam Chair.

Senator Capito. Thank you.

Senator Wicker?

Senator Wicker. Thank you, Madam Chair. I am going to use some of that same stretched five minutes that our distinguished Chair used.

I am from Mississippi. We already have our member on the board, Bill Renick, who was chairman of the Tennessee Valley Authority board. His term doesn't expire until 2027. So I am glad that Tennessee is getting two more, and now Alabama will have its share.

Mississippi is actually the second highest user of TVA. Tennessee has 52 percent of the total area covered by TVA, and after that is Mississippi at 19 percent, Alabama down at 11. So we are not Tennessee, totally TVA, we can compare. And I can just say that TVA, where it is available in Mississippi, is quite appreciated and quite popular.

There was some statement made about acting boldly and I certainly want to commend, and I think I see from the testimony, Madam Chair, Mr. Ranking Member, that there is much appreciation for the bold action of TVA in recent years.

The Clinch River project will be one of the first, at the forefront of new nuclear development in the United States, currently, two to three years ahead of anyone else in terms of SMRs.

In my own State of Mississippi, we are benefiting from the rates that give us economic expansion, GE Aerospace that just recently expanded in Panola County, near Batesville, the Golden Triangle, Columbus, Starkville and West Point, home of Mississippi State University there in Starkville is now home to five TVA certified mega sites. TVA is advancing plans to build a simple cycle nuclear, I mean natural gas plant.

It is just astounding, the things that are happening. When complete, the New Caledonia site in East Mississippi will bring 500 megawatts to the grid, enough to power 250,000 homes, which is quite a big area in a rural State like Mississippi.

There is a company called OKLO which is out of Oak Ridge, in Mr. Hagood's neighborhood. It has an advanced nuclear technology company that will invest nearly $1.7 billion to build fuel recycling right there in Oak Ridge, Tennessee. The folks there are thrilled about this, and it again, speaks to the vision of the current and past leadership. The facility is located on a 247-acre site at Oak Ridge Heritage Center.

There is also an outfit called ENTRA1 Energy, that will collaborate with TVA to provide up to 6 gigawatts of new nuclear power generation on sites in TVA's seven-State region. This will eventually be able to power the equivalent of approximately 4.6 million homes, or 60 of these new power consuming data centers, which we are all concerned about and which I join my

friend, Mr. Kelly, from.

Google, Kairos, they are bringing transformational change in the nuclear energy area field to TVA. TVA is the first U.S. utility to sign a PPA to buy electricity from advanced generation 4 reactor, and Hermes 2 is the first deployment under Kairos' Power landmark deal with Google.

And I could go on and on. Not to mention the charities and non-profits that TVA supports. TVA Bicentennial Volunteers, $655,000 in robotics awards. And yes, TVA prices are still something that we benefit from in Appalachia, Madam Chair. And I certainly appreciate that.

I am so impressed, and I am going to take some extra time if you don't mind, and I know my friend from Massachusetts won't mind, because I listened to him for over an hour yesterday in the Commerce Committee.

[Laughter.]

Senator Wicker. And he is a dear friend of mine.

But let me just, going through the testimony today, Mr. Graves knows it well, and I grew up watching Memphis TV, I am so old that we didn't have TV in Tupelo, we had to watch Memphis until I got on up to the teenage years. And so I know about MLGW.

But Mr. Graves said Memphis and the Valley region are well served by TVA. Thank you for saying that. We can do better,

but I think most people in the Memphis viewing area and in MLGW area agree with that.

And Madam Chair, Mr. Hagood's testimony is they had an opportunity to look at other providers that made outreach to them and said no, we are going to stick with TVA, because they have served us better and they will serve us better.

Mr. Hagood says, "Today, TVA continues to drive energy production, economic development and access to natural resources across the region." And Mr. Jones, as somebody who frequently goes by Lake Guntersville and who, every chance I get, goes to Pickwick Reservoir in the northeast corner of the State of Mississippi, yes, I mean, we love TVA's power generation and yes, almost 10 percent is still hydropower, and that is renewable as far as I am concerned.

But that wonderful Lake Guntersville, that is an economic engine for the area and the same for Pickwick Reservoir.
Mr. Jones says, "Even now our residential power rates remain 30 percent below those of neighboring providers." This is a great testimony and kudos to the President, my colleagues, for bringing someone in from outside the TVA area to bring some new thought.

Mr. Graham, he knows what he is doing, it is obvious, because he has been doing this in Jacksonville. But he is also aware of this NIMBY issue. In his testimony he says he is aware

of the "not in my back yard" people. And there has to be a balance here, because somebody's back yard has got to generate power, and we need to be mindful of those folks but we also need to be mindful, it has to come from somewhere.

And also, I appreciate Mr. Graham saying we can't prematurely close down current generation and make the contribution to generation that Mr. Kelly and others have alluded to. We are going to have to do it right and yes, nuclear and renewable is the way to go.

So I appreciate the acknowledgement from these fine witnesses who I intend to vote for in acknowledging the contribution and the great work that TVA has done and yes, the economic development and jobs are there. And I look forward to the board, which has been working mighty hard, but now they have a quorum, being complemented by these witnesses.

And thank you for that extended five minutes, Madam Chair.

Senator Capito. Thank you.

Senator Whitehouse?

Senator Whitehouse. Thanks very much, Chairman, and welcome to all the nominees. Thank you for your visit to my office yesterday.

Unlike Mr. Hagood, I did not have the wisdom to start my own practice, but spent my early years as the junior new kid in the attorney general's office where they came in and handed me

utility regulation. Nobody else wanted it. I was the new kid; I had to do it.

And I have learned a lot from those early days. One of the things I have learned is that the way the grid works is that usually nukes run constantly because they are low marginal cost, and then usually solar comes on next, because it is the next lower operating cost, followed by wind and then the grid price set by the most expensive unit that has to be called up is almost always a fossil fuel unit.

So if you remove clean energy from the grid, what you are doing is requiring for the same level of demand that more and more expensive fossil fuel powered units get called up. That raises costs for everybody on the grid, in most grids where that last unit called up is the price setter.

Now, I know it is a little bit different on the TVA grid where you use a more blended grid. But I think the principle holds that if you suppress the lower cost forms of power, you drive prices up for your ratepayers even if it is only on an average basis and not on a grid-wide basis.

In that light, I would like to ask if each of you will honor the board-approved retirement timelines for the Kingston and Cumberland coal generating stations? We can just go right across, if you don't mind.

Mr. Graves. Thank you for that question, Senator. I think

it is a little bit more complicated than answering yes or no. I think we have got to use all of our energy sources right now to meet the demand.

And I think you heard me mention earlier the Integrated Resource Plan which ought to be the strategy document for TVA. We have looked at that at a very high level. But we are going to have to dig into the details.

Senator Whitehouse. Do you plan to honor the existing Integrated Resource Plan? Or are you going to change that?

Mr. Graves. Senator, I think we will have a new Integrated Resource Plan here within the year.

Senator Whitehouse. Okay. Is that pretty much the same answer across the board? Anybody prepared to commit to honoring the Cumberland and Kingston Station Plan?

Mr. Hagood. Thank you, Senator. My answer would be the same as my colleague on the right.

Senator Whitehouse. Mr. Jones, the same?

Mr. Jones. Until I am confirmed, I would like to look into this and see, because I do believe in the renewables and carbon-free.

Senator Whitehouse. Mr. Graham? Same?

Mr. Graham. Pretty much the same, sir.

Senator Whitehouse. So, one of the other things I wanted to ask you, we talked about this a little bit when we were

together, if you go to the Kingston Station and the Cumberland Station, they boil water with coal. But the steam then runs through steam turbines and that runs generators that send out power through transformers that link to the grid connections and the transmission lines. In addition to all of that mechanical-electrical infrastructure, you also have the all-important community infrastructure of the workforce there, the men and women who have the expert knowledge and experience to run those facilities.

So I want to ask each of you to assure me that you will give an honest, hard look at whether small modular reactors create the opportunity to boil that water at those stations and protect the rest of the infrastructure and the workforce around it while still meeting the board-approved goals regarding those two stations.

Mr. Graves. Ranking Member, we talked about that yesterday. I found that to be an intriguing concept. And yes, I think we should explore that. It should lower costs of the program as well and time frame if we can leave portions of it in place and only replace the heating element.

Senator Whitehouse. If you are trying to locate a new small modular system station somewhere, and you have to start from scratch, and you have to deal with siting issues and you have to build the steam turbines, the generators, the

transformers, the transmission and the workforce, you are in a much different proposition than you are if most of that is already there and you are just boiling water a new, cleaner, safer way.

Mr. Graves. Senator, as I said, yes, I found that intriguing. And it was a takeaway --

Senator Whitehouse. Will you take an honest look at it?

Mr. Graves. Yes, sir, Senator, thank you. I certainly would take an honest, hard look at it.

Mr. Jones. Yes, sir, and to me again, we talk about nuclear. But we have got to have a sense of urgency to make this happen and then to put it in place.

Senator Whitehouse. Mr. Graham?

Mr. Graham. Senator, thank you. I think it is a fantastic idea. I have talked about before about when you are talking about new nuclear and you have to "nuclearize" the entire site, I don't think you need to do that. I think you just do a black box, you just do, where the power is generated, you don't have to worry about the water and the steam generation. You don't have to worry about anything on this side, just that area.

I think in your scenario, you can take the same black box and put it anywhere. So I think it is a great way of retrofitting old plants.

Senator Whitehouse. My time is expired. But let me ask

each of you to be responsive to the questions for the record that I am going to file for you to answer, so you can take more than five minutes and reflect a bit first.

But in particular, I am going to be asking you to reflect on the fact that I believe is true, that if you suppress wind and solar power and perhaps battery support for wind and solar power, you are virtually inevitably raising costs for your TVA ratepayers at the end of the day.

Thank you.

Senator Capito. Thank you.

Senator Markey?

Senator Markey. Thank you, Madam Chair.

I am a big fan of public power. I know communities and labor are as well. Why? Because it is a win-win-win. Public power puts local communities before investor profits. It pays workers what they deserve and it keeps energy affordable. In fact, because of its public power model, the Tennessee Valley Authority's electricity is cheaper thank over 70 percent of our Nation.

So yes or no, going down the line, do you support the privatization of TVA? Yes or no.

Mr. Graves. No.

Mr. Hagood. Thank you, Senator, for that question. The answer is no, sir.

Mr. Jones. No, sir.

Mr. Graham. Senator, thank you very much for that question. I have experienced both public utility and investor-owned utility. I think there is absolutely no reason to do anything different here.

Senator Markey, . The answer is no?

Mr. Graham. I believe that is correct. Yes.

Senator Markey. Good. Thank you. I appreciate it.

So I just want to dig a little deeper. Yes or no, going down the line, do you agree, do you agree not to sell of any portions of the service region, including transmission, hydro or public land assets?

Mr. Graves. Senator, I don't think that is the board's decision. I think we uphold the TVA Act, which is enacted by you guys.

Senator Markey. Do you agree not to sell off any of the portions of the service region, Mr. Hagood?

Mr. Hagood. Senator, I agree with my colleague; that would be my answer. Thank you, sir.

Mr. Jones. Yes, sir, I do not see any reason why to sell of TVA's assets off.

Senator Markey. Thank you. That is the correct answer, yes.

Mr. Graham. Sir, until I hear something different, I don't

see any need to make any changes as far as selling off assets.

Senator Markey. Thank you.

At a time when utility bills are going up across the Country because of Trump's anti-energy policies, it is more important than ever to have public power that is responsive to the region's Main Street needs, not Wall Street shareholders. And privatization would be a direct threat to both TVA customers and TVA's workforce.

So yes or no, going down the line, do you agree to maintain strong collective bargaining relationships and protect good-paying union jobs? Mr. Graves?

Mr. Graves. Thank you, Senator. I have not read the collective bargaining, but I agree to do that and make a decision after I fully understand it.

Senator Markey. Mr. Hagood?

Mr. Hagood. Senator, thank you for that question. I believe that TVA's employees, as of maybe six months or a year ago, were 55, 57 percent union. So the answer is yes.

Senator Markey. So you would make a commitment to continue collective bargaining?

Mr. Hagood. I would make every commitment to look into that.

Senator Markey. That is not a commitment.

Mr. Jones?

Mr. Jones. Yes, sir, I would.

Senator Markey. Thank you, sir.

Mr. Graham. Senator, I think it is working very well right now. I have no desire to get in there and make that change.

Senator Markey. Thank you, sir. Yes, we need a commitment to public power. We need a commitment to public power employees, union workers who are doing the job right now.

So this is an astonishing number, but only 4 percent of TVA's energy portfolio is currently comprised of wind or solar. Just a staggeringly low number.

By comparison, in my own home State of Massachusetts, where Senator Schiff was born and raised as a boy, still a Red Sox fan, it is not the sunniest place, Massachusetts. But last year, 25 percent of our electricity came from wind and solar. Only 4 percent in the TVA, where it is a lot sunnier.

So the good news is that the TVA has a large stock of carbon-free power and has recognized the benefits of moving toward clean, reliable, affordable energy, setting a target of 10,000 megawatts of solar by 2035 and net-zero emissions by 2050.

So yes or no, going down the line, do you commit to adhering to TVA's target to reach net-zero emissions by 2050? Mr. Graves?

Mr. Graves. Senator, that is tough to answer yes or no to.

I think we are in the middle of an Integrated Resource Plan which is taking a look at future demand and our energy generation --

Senator Markey. TVA has a stated goal to be net-zero by the year 2050. Do you commit to fulfilling that plan?

Mr. Graves. Senator, I commit to making sure we have got enough power to take care of our citizens.

Senator Markey. You are not committing.

Mr. Hagood?

Mr. Hagood. Senator, thank you for that question. I think because of the great power need, I think that probably has to be reevaluated.

Senator Markey. Yes, I think I can hear what the two of you are saying pretty clearly.

Mr. Jones?

Mr. Jones. Senator, currently over 50 percent of the power generated by TVA is carbon-free. So we hope to keep on striving on that.

Also, on the 4 percent, I would love to also include hydro, which is the original renewable resource.

Senator Markey. I appreciate that. So how about --

Mr. Jones. So that makes us 13 percent.

Senator Markey. So is the answer yes?

Mr. Jones. Yes, sir.

Senator Markey. You commit to that goal?

Mr. Jones. I commit to see what we can -- I can't promise that is going to happen because of the need for power.

Senator Markey. Four percent renewables is all you have right now.

Mr. Jones. Needs to be a go.

Senator Markey. It is sad. Yes, sir, Mr. Graham.

Mr. Graham. Thank you, Senator. Can I get you to repeat the question, please?

Senator Markey. Yes. The question is, do you commit to adhering to TVA's target to reach net-zero emissions by 2050? It is the existing goal of the TVA. Do you commit to adhering to that?

Mr. Graham. I commit to looking into it.

Senator Markey. Well, again, TVA should be the cutting edge leader. They are already on third base with a lead. You have incredible resources down there. It is sunny almost every day in that region, which it is not in Massachusetts.

And I think it is a pretty sad commentary that we are not getting a more enthusiastic response to the goal of deploying renewables and meeting the goal, which was established years ago, which is eminently achievable. But it is just still a continuing sad commentary on the vision which the TVA has.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Senator Capito. Senator Schiff?

Senator Schiff. Thank you, Madam Chair. As is often the case, Senator Markey asked many of the questions I was going to ask. I won't repeat those questions for you.

I appreciate the opportunity we had to meet in my office. I share Senator Markey's view; public power has helped keep energy affordable in TVA. It has attracted industry, it has strengthened rural communities for decades, going back to the establishment of the TVA under Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal.

I think that public power model is the best path forward for TVA, and I was glad to hear in our conversations and again in committee that you are committed to retaining the public power model.

I strongly disagree with any effort at privatization of TVA assets or moving away, selling away the resources of TVA, which has proven so successful. I also think it is vitally important that you honor the collective bargaining agreements that are in force, and that you make it possible for people to collectively bargain and make the choice to form a union or not form a union, that that be free and unfettered.

Let me turn to the last topic the Senator asked you about, but maybe with one specific. I understand that the TVA board approved the retirement of two of the four coal plants in TVA's

service area. The 2025 TVA Integrated Resource Plan forecast that all coal units will retire by 2035. Are you committed to maintaining a course with the 2025 Integrated Resource Plan when it comes to coal retirement? Mr. Graves?

Mr. Graves. Thank you for the question, Senator. And I do believe we need to maintain as a public utility company.

It may be a struggle to meet those targets, just because of the increased demand. Again, we hope to be able to learn more and figure out how to move forward with our Integrated Resource Plan, which is going to tell us what we need and how we fulfill that need. So I think right now it may be hard to make those targets.

Senator Schiff. Well, I think a lot of that increased demand may come from data centers. And in connection with negotiations over companies that want to establish data centers, there is an opportunity for you to maintain the climate goals that have been set and to maintain the retirement schedule that has been set for the coal plants.

So I don't think generically increased demand is a reason to continue coal plants that have properly been scheduled for retirement.

Mr. Hagood, what is your view?

Mr. Hagood. Senator, thank you, and thank you for meeting with us yesterday. I do think it would be hard to meet those

goals.

Senator Schiff. So you are not committed to retiring the coal plants, then?

Mr. Hagood. With the situation with the great power demand in our Country, Senator, I don't think I can.

Senator Schiff. So if it is necessary to accommodate new data centers, your view would be, let's keep the coal plants going, rather than, let's require the data centers to participate in generation of cleaner energy?

Mr. Hagood. Senator, thank you. My goal would be to, everything is on the table to meet the power, the growing power demand. That would be my answer.

Senator Schiff. Mr. Jones?

Mr. Jones. Senator, if confirmed, this will be one of my top priorities, to look into this. Because the data centers are going to require so much power. There was an article in the Wall Street Journal this week about bringing your own power.

So hopefully, those data centers can be bringing in the renewables, carbon-free power to sustain the power for them, which in turn would take less stress off of our grid and our power generations and increase more solar power and hydro. I am a big fan of hydro.

Senator Schiff. And Mr. Jones, I agree to a point, and that is when you say you would hope that these new data centers

and the companies behind them would bring in renewable energy. You will have the power to insist that that is where the new energy comes from.

Mr. Jones. Exactly.

Senator Schiff. And your communities are going to suffer whatever deleterious impacts there are from these data centers. They may not create many jobs. And if it is going to mean the coal plants remain open longer and people suffer the ill health effects, and don't get many jobs as a result, that doesn't look like a good bargain to me.

So I would ask you to keep that very much in mind.

Mr. Graham, did you want to add anything on the question?

Mr. Graham. Senator, thank you very much for that question.

Data centers are all over the board. There are people that are excited about it, there are people that don't want it in their back yard. I think, and you weren't here earlier, we talked about the number one job that is going to be for us to figure out how much power generation we are going to need moving forward, today, tomorrow, next year, five years.

Then once we figure out how much we need generation-wise, I can't see prematurely closing out some of these other plants until we have the generation to replace it. I am not saying you can't close them down, but until we have the generation to

replace it, you can't.

Senator Schiff. Well, thank you, Madam Chair.

I would just say, just to conclude, I am glad you all expressed solid support for maintaining the public character of TVA. I hope never to learn that, should you be confirmed for these positions, that you do an about-face on that issue, which is of signal importance to me and to I think a lot of the members of Congress.

With that, Madam Chair, I yield back.

Senator Capito. Thank you.

Thank you. I think that will bring our meeting to conclusion. I would like, for the record, to ask for unanimous consent, I have letters of support for various nominees. So ordered.

[The referenced information follows:]

Senator Capito. I will order it myself.

[Laughter.]

Senator Capito. I am not going to object to myself.

I thank you all very much. I look forward to your confirmation. I will be voting for all of you. I think that the expertise that you bring, while varied, is extremely needed on the board, and we obviously have challenges ahead of us.

Coming from a coal State, I have to say that we have powered generations of this Country for years, and we are going

to continue to do that until we find a better way. And that is what you all basically were, I think, signifying to us in your answers. So I thank you for that.

With no further questions, I would like to thank the nominees and all of my colleagues for their participation in today's hearing. Senators who wish to submit written questions for the record have until 5:00 p.m. this Friday, October 24th, to do so. The nominees' responses to those questions are due back to the committee no later than close of business on Monday, October 27th and will be submitted for the record.

I would note, Ranking Member Whitehouse did make the comment that he will be submitting some questions to you. So I would pay attention to that and to those dates that I expressed.

And with that, this hearing is adjourned. Thank you very much. Good luck.

[Whereupon, at 11:31 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]