

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

Madam Chairman, ranking member Vitter and distinguished members of the Committee, I am enormously honored to be nominated by President Obama to serve on the board of directors of the Tennessee Valley Authority. I thank Congressman Cohen, who brought me to the attention of the President, the Congressional Black Caucus and others who have generously supported my nomination. I also thank you for your consideration as I appear before you to seek your consent and approval.

My entire adult working life, I have been fortunate to have great opportunities in both the public and private sectors.

In 1980, I was hired by Memphis Light Gas and Water Division (MLGW)—TVA's largest customer—as Assistant to the President. Prior to that, I defined TVA as a complex and large wholesaler of power, which in fact it primarily is. However, one my first assignments at MLGW enhanced that perception. I was assigned to work with TVA field representatives on a conservation project in a challenged urban area of Memphis. This joint venture between TVA and MLGW showed low-income residents how to insulate their homes efficiently and inexpensively, helping them achieve consumption and financial savings thereby improving their well-being.

We also bought supplies, where possible, at local businesses to benefit the community. In a very small way, this was a seed planted in the neighborhood to grow and nurture economic development. This experience gave me a greater appreciation of the outreach of TVA and had a significant impact on me.

Working at MLGW really opened my eyes. Through my later experience there as Vice President of Customer Relations, I communicated and worked with key utility stakeholders: customers, company colleagues, the media, community and political leaders and others. I dealt with budgets, and developed strategic initiatives and executed departmental plans as well as worked with the management team in carrying out the company's greater objectives. I learned much about government and business from that assignment.

Fine tuning my business skills and work with government continued in my role at WREG-TV, the CBS Affiliate in Memphis, Tennessee, where I serve as President and General Manager. Managing this television station, which is the number one station in the Memphis Television Market, requires my team and me to achieve budgets, evaluate new technologies, manage professional staffs, interface with the FCC, create and implement short and long-term goals and solve difficult problems. It is a deliberate team effort.

My extensive volunteer life includes service on community, state and regional boards, ranging from universities and colleges, hospitals and civil rights groups to charitable entities

whose goals are to meet the needs of people. My board and work experiences have this in common: a keen focus on and a good understanding of operations and compliance with rules and regulations that govern them.

There is no doubt that in my volunteer and professional work, institutional challenges are faced and sound solutions are sought. Quite often, there are no easy fixes or short cuts. Board members and staff must work hard and smart as they properly evaluate matters and render decisions. Objectivity and independence are essential.

Board members of TVA have similar responsibilities as they consider TVA's diverse challenges such as choosing and developing alternative power sources, dealing with pension reform, debt reduction, rates, river management, and protecting the environment in the generation of power. As a successful businessman and a community servant, I feel I can assist this venerable organization in these and other tasks.

And finally, as fourth-generation resident of the Tennessee Valley, it is my belief that TVA must be preserved for future generations, and I welcome the opportunity to serve on this board, if confirmed. Thank you again for holding this hearing. I look forward to taking your questions.