

Table of Contents

U.S. Senate Date: Wednesday, April 6, 2022

Committee on Environment
and Public Works

Subcommittee on Clean Air, Climate,
and Nuclear Safety

Washington, D.C.

STATEMENT OF:	PAGE:
THE HONORABLE EDWARD MARKEY, A UNITED STATES SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF MASSACHUSETTS	3
THE HONORABLE JAMES M. INHOFE, A UNITED STATES SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA	8
THE HONORABLE THOMAS R. CARPER, A UNITED STATES SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF DELAWARE	11
BETH PRICHARD GEER, NOMINATED TO BE A MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS, TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY	15
ROBERT KLEIN, NOMINATED TO BE A MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS, TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY	20
L. MICHELLE MOORE, NOMINATED TO BE A MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS, TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY	25
BEN WAGNER, NOMINATED TO BE INSPECTOR GENERAL OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY	30

HEARING ON THE NOMINATIONS OF BETH PRITCHARD GEER, OF TENNESSEE,
ROBERT P. KLEIN, OF TENNESSEE, AND L. MICHELLE MOORE, OF
GEORGIA, TO BE MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE
TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY, AND BEN WAGNER TO BE INSPECTOR
GENERAL OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY

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The committee, met, pursuant to notice, at 2:26 p.m. in
room 406, Dirksen Senate Office Building, the Honorable Edward
Markey [chairman of the subcommittee] presiding.

Present: Senators Markey, Inhofe, Carper, Capito, Cramer,
Ernst.

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE EDWARD MARKEY, A UNITED STATES
SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF MASSACHUSETTS

Senator Markey. I would like to note that there is a history-breaking moment that has just occurred. A Senate committee started five minutes early, so I just want everyone to note that it can happen. A little bit miraculous, but nonetheless, it will benefit everyone.

I want to thank my Ranking Member, Senator Inhofe, and to the Chairman and Ranking Member of the Committee on Environment and Public Works, Senator Carper and Senator Capito, for their invaluable partnership in holding this hearing and for joining us today. It is my pleasure to welcome my colleagues on the subcommittee as well as our four extremely qualified nominees for leadership and oversight roles at the Tennessee Valley Authority. We welcome them to our subcommittee today.

The core mission of the TVA is just as relevant today as it was when the Authority was created nearly 90 years ago. In 1933, Congress created the TVA to unleash the potential of the rich resources of the Tennessee Valley Region and improve the lives of the people who live there.

While the mission of the TVA remains the same today, there is more that the Authority can do to ensure that it serves its intended role as a national leader in technological innovation, low-cost power, and environmental stewardship, the mission of

the TVA.

In addition to providing flood control, navigation, and land management for the Tennessee River System and assisting local and regional economic development efforts, the TVA also serves as the Nation's largest public power provider. With 10 million customers, TVA can and should foster the kind of innovation that can diversify the region's energy resources, grow union jobs, and reduce consumers' energy burdens, improve energy reliability and affordability, and protect the environment at the same time.

While only 3 percent of TVA's energy portfolio is comprised of wind and solar, the Authority has the opportunity to advance the development and adoption of both utility scale and distributed clean energy in the region, creating jobs and lowering customers' energy bills as the cost of renewable energy starts outcompeting fossil fuels.

Since most of the States that are in the TVA are very sunny most of the year, it actually doesn't make any sense that they don't have a higher percentage of solar. Since it is very windy in many parts of the TVA, because it is so vast, it is shocking that they don't have a higher percentage of wind. It is almost as though it is still the 1930s and there hasn't been any real progress in terms of the implementation of real change in those States.

Senator Inhofe. We have more wind in Oklahoma.

Senator Markey. Oklahoma, to its credit, has a higher percentage of wind-generated electricity than the TVA does, and it is not a federally subsidized agency the way the TVA is. So we are looking for real progress, following on the Oklahoma model, so that there is a balance of all of these technologies.

Unfortunately, the TVA has pushed for several decades more fossil fuel energy at the expense of potentially cheaper renewable sources, which pollutes our communities and exacerbates energy burdens for TVA customers who already pay some of the highest electricity bills in the Nation as a percentage of household income.

The TVA Board of Directors will make important decisions about TVA's energy planning for years to come. It is critical that the Board is comprised of leaders who will ensure that the TVA provides all Tennessee Valley households with access to reliable, clean, and affordable electricity while continuing to employ local workers in good-paying jobs and supporting economic development in the region.

I believe that the nominees before us today, who are extremely qualified for these positions, will be well-equipped to consider these important questions in their service on the TVA Board and as TVA Inspector General. The addition of Ms. Geer, Mr. Klein, and Ms. Moore to the TVA Board of Directors

would provide welcome leadership to the TVA as it works to continue providing power generation, flood management capacity, and economic development to the millions of Americans living in the Tennessee Valley. The timely confirmation of these nominees is critical to ensuring that the TVA Board of Directors has the quorum it needs to carry off its duties.

The Board currently has five members, with four vacancies. The terms of two of the five current TVA Board members will expire next month, potentially leaving the Board two members short of a quorum after the end of this year. To avoid such a scenario, the committee must soon advance the confirmation of these eminently qualified nominees.

In addition to strong leadership on the TVA Board of Directors, I am confident that Mr. Wagner would provide important independent oversight as the Inspector General of the TVA. Mr. Wagner is a 38-year veteran of the TVA, with decades of experience within the Office of Inspector General. If confirmed, his deep knowledge of the TVA and the role of the Inspector General will allow him to provide invaluable leadership to this critical office.

I would also like to congratulate Ms. Geer, Mr. Klein, and Ms. Moore, and Mr. Wagner on their nominations, and I look forward to hearing from all of you today. Before we turn to our witnesses for their testimony, I want to turn to the Ranking

Member of the subcommittee, Senator Inhofe, for his opening statement.

[The prepared statement of Senator Markey follows:]

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE JAMES M. INHOFE, A UNITED STATES
SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA

Senator Inhofe. What might surprise a lot of you is that we have served together, in the House and in the Senate, and we are very close friends, even though he is wrong on a few issues.

[Laughter.]

Senator Inhofe. But we have enjoyed, I have to say the same thing is true with Mr. Carper. I have chaired this committee also, and we have always, this is the committee that actually does get things done. I used to say that when we would have our bipartisan meetings.

Anyway, while my home State of Oklahoma is not part of the TVA region, having been a former chairman of this committee, I have come to know and appreciate the vital role that TVA plays in the States of Tennessee, Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, and Virginia.

With that in mind, geographic representation at our agencies cannot be overlooked. I share the concern of my colleagues from Kentucky and Mississippi who are disappointed by President Biden's highly unusual decision not to put forward nominations to the TVA Board from those particular States, two States.

It is past time that the President put forward nominees from these States. The TVA keeps the lights on for nearly 10

million Americans, and it does so with an all-of-the-above energy approach to power generation, which includes fossil fuels. Today, fossil fuels make up over 40 percent of TVA's electricity generation portfolio, while wind and solar account for just 3 percent. The calls to eliminate fossil fuels from the power sector are foolish and would be devastating for the American people by increasing already sky-high utility bills and create greater unreliability for the electric grid.

Last month, media reports indicated that the TVA intends to invest over \$3.5 billion in new natural gas-burning electric plants. This is a smart investment because when the sun isn't shining and the wind isn't blowing, we require fuels like natural gas that are far more reliable and affordable when compared to intermittent renewable sources. The TVA must not be weaponized to pursue a radical Green New Deal-inspired agenda that forgoes reliability and affordability and fossil fuels for its power supply in the name of climate alarmism.

It is my hope that these nominees recognize the need for fossil fuels and the restrictions, I might add, that they are under to no fault or credit of their own. I look forward to carrying on with this, Mr. Chairman, okay?

[The prepared statement of Senator Inhofe follows:]

Senator Markey. And I thank you, my good friend from Oklahoma, even though I am the author of the Green New Deal. I didn't take any of that criticism personally.

[Laughter.]

Senator Markey. I just understand it is a historical debate he and I have had for 35 years on all of these issues.

Senator Inhofe. We both have thick skin, right?

Senator Markey. Absolutely. You are in the wrong business if you don't.

Let me turn and recognize the Chairman. We are fortunate to be graced with the presence of the Chairman of the full committee, Senator Carper.

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE SENATOR THOMAS R. CARPER, A UNITED STATES SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF DELAWARE

Senator Carper. Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Thanks to our Ranking Member. Thanks to each of you for the good work you have done with your lives to date. We have had a chance to learn and read a good deal about you, and we are just honored that you are willing to serve in these roles.

I met earlier this week here with the man who heads up the Delaware Electric Coop in Delaware. There is, as you know, a number of electric coops in States across the Country. In many cases, they partner together and work together to try to provide reliable, affordable energy for businesses and for families across great parts of our Country. They are also trying, at least in my neck of the woods, trying to do so in ways that recognize that we face terrific challenges with way too much carbon dioxide in the air, and that we need to do something about it.

The greatest source of emissions, carbon emissions, in our Country comes from our cars, trucks, and vans, and we have the technology. I now drive an electric vehicle after driving a 2001 Town and Country Chrysler for 600,000 miles. Finally, I sold it for a dollar, and now I drive an electric vehicle. I drive by gas stations that say gas is four bucks a gallon. Times have changed, and I have changed.

We are hopeful that the change is literally underway in the ways that TVA provides electricity to its customers across great parts of our Country, that you will continue to make those changes. We need you to.

I especially need you to, I will just mention, Delaware, we are the lowest-lying State in America, the lowest-lying State in America. Our State is sinking. The waters around us are rising.

My wife and I were in Florida not long ago, in part of Miami. It was right after NOAA, the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration, had just come out with a recent report that said, if you think sea level rise over the last 100 years has been scary and bad, it is going to get a lot worse a lot sooner. These are all issues that are before us and, in a way, directly and indirectly, it will be before you. I would just ask that you keep those in mind as you go forward.

Thank you. It was great to see you. I hope the service that you are about to begin will bring you great joy in your lives and into the lives of those you serve. Thank you so much.

[The prepared statement of Senator Carper follows:]

Senator Markey. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, very much.

Now, we will turn to our witnesses. First, we are going to hear from Beth Geer, who has been nominated to serve as a member of the Board of Directors of the Tennessee Valley Authority. Ms. Geer is a native of rural Tennessee, and graduate of Middle Tennessee State University, the same as our former colleague, Bart Gordon, a good friend of ours and a very focused, technology-oriented guy. She is currently a resident of Brentwood, Tennessee, along with her husband, Dr. John Geer. Ms. Geer is Chief of Staff to former Vice President Al Gore and a member of the Nashville Mayor John Cooper's Sustainability Advisory Committee.

Next, we are going to hear from Robert Klein, who is also nominated to serve as a member of the Board of Directors of the Tennessee Valley Authority. Mr. Klein is a lifelong resident of Chattanooga and served in the Tennessee Army National Guard. Mr. Klein has worked at or with the electrical utility industry throughout his whole career as a lineman, as a line foreman. He served as International Vice President of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers and as President of the Tennessee Valley Trades and Labor Council for 14 years.

After that, we are going to hear from Michelle Moore, who is also nominated to serve as a member of the Board of Directors of the Tennessee Valley Authority. She is from rural Georgia

and currently serves as the CEO of Groundswell, a nonprofit that supports communities with clean energy and resilience programs to provide power savings and economic opportunity among more than 4,000 families.

Finally, we are going to hear from Ben Wagner, the nominee for the position of Inspector General for the Tennessee Valley Authority. He has spent 38 years working at the TVA, including 31 years within the office of the Inspector General, giving him extensive experience with auditing, risk management, fraud, risk assessment, ethics, and compliance, and organizational effectiveness assessments. Mr. Wagner was born in New Mexico, but has lived in the Tennessee Valley Region for most of his life.

We welcome all of you. We will begin with you, Ms. Geer, whenever you are comfortable. Please begin.

STATEMENT OF BETH PRICHARD GEER, NOMINATED TO BE A MEMBER OF THE
BOARD OF DIRECTORS, TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY

Ms. Geer. Thank you, Senator.

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 to the Tennessee Valley Authority Board of Directors.

With me today, I have my husband, Dr. John Geer, and my son, Frederick Albert.

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 have been able to make Tennessee home is the Tennessee Valley Authority. The TVA gave rise to the 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 would 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, in part due 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 am also proud of how far our small communities have come and how much further they can go with the assistance of the TVA. It is important to have Board members who understand rural regions, for more than 85 percent of Valley communities are designated as a Rural or Special Opportunity County. TVA has done a lot to bring capital investment and good-paying jobs to rural areas through programs tailored to meet their needs, 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, 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. I 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.

The financial success of renewable energy is something I observe daily in my current work, and it is why the sustainability revolution may now be the most significant investing and business opportunity in the world. For example, Ford Motor Company recently picked the Tennessee Valley as its largest, most advanced, and most efficient auto production campus in Ford's history because of the affordable, reliable, and clean energy the TVA provides.

Sustainability makes sense for our environment and for our economy, too. The TVA's success in 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. Central to that service has been my ability to bring people together. I have worked in community and investor relations for several private companies and managed communications at Cumberland University in Lebanon, Tennessee, where I was happy to help reconnect the university with its community. I will bring that same commitment to the entire Tennessee Valley if I am confirmed as a TVA Board member.

In closing, I firmly believe that doing what is best for all the people of the Tennessee Valley is what matters. 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.

I appreciate your consideration of my nomination and thank you, once again, for the opportunity.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Geer follows:]

Senator Markey. Thank you so much, Ms. Geer.

Mr. Klein, whenever you are ready.

STATEMENT OF ROBERT KLEIN, NOMINATED TO BE A MEMBER OF THE BOARD
OF DIRECTORS, TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY

Mr. Klein. Chairman Carper, Ranking Member Capito, Chairman Markey, Ranking Member Inhofe, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

I am honored to be nominated by President Biden to serve on the Tennessee Valley Authority Board of Directors. I would also like to acknowledge and thank Senator Blackburn and Senator Hagerty from my home State of Tennessee for their service to the State and support of TVA and me throughout this confirmation process.

I have been a lifelong resident of the Tennessee Valley, having been born and raised in Chattanooga, Tennessee. I have been privileged to have worked with the electrical utility industry my entire adult life. Working at the Electric Power Board of Chattanooga as a journeyman lineman and line foreman, I gained the knowledge and skill to construct and maintain transmission and distribution power systems, thus educating me on the operational side of the industry.

As an international representative and International Vice President of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, I had the opportunity to work with many utilities in the Southeast, including TVA.

In all my years of working with TVA, I never lost sight of the fact that for all residents of the valley to prosper, TVA had to be successful. Clean, sustainable, and competitive energy stimulates the economy and grows jobs. I have the experience and knowledge to be an asset to TVA, and most importantly, the mission of TVA, to serve the people of the valley by providing low-cost energy, environmental stewardship, and economic development.

In working with and looking at the history of TVA, it is evident that its leadership and employees have been committed to its mission from the beginning. I have witnessed the impact they have had on my community, not only from the provision of energy resources, but also through river navigation and flood control, recreational activities, economic development opportunities, and service to this community through its leadership and shared resources. I believe the strength of the TVA is the people who work there.

During my career, I participated in joint training and safety programs of the TVA. Their four core values of safety, integrity, inclusion, and service were never compromised, and to this day reflects their longstanding mission and dedication toward their employees. TVA's workforce has been an important and vital component in the success of the agency, from the first hydro plant built, the first construction of a transmission

grid, to the completion of the most recent nuclear plant to come online in the United States. I am committed to a skilled, trained, and diverse workforce within the agency.

TVA is an important player in the United States' electrical system. Its position as a government-owned public utility poises TVA to be a leader in technology and innovation for the Nation, allowing the United States and the Southeast, in particular, to contribute to our collective goals of decarbonization. If confirmed, I would support TVA's guiding principles to reduce carbon emissions and look for projects that could potentially lead the way in further reductions.

I am aware of TVA's interest in exploring the building of a small, modular nuclear reactor near Oakridge, Tennessee. This project represents what could become the Nation's next generation of nuclear plants.

With my background in the industry, I also know that asset changes in the utility sector impact the men and women that have kept our lights on over the years. I am sensitive to this, and if confirmed, I am committed to working with the leadership to ensure employees are given ample opportunity to be retrained and are offered positions elsewhere within the agency.

If confirmed to serve on the TVA Board, I am committed to move TVA forward in a path that addresses not only interests I have mentioned, but other areas that will help them to fulfill

its mission of service to the industry, distributors, and economic development and to bring prosperity to all inhabitants of the valley. I believe my experience in the electrical utility industry, specifically public power, has prepared me for the challenge and responsibility of joining the TVA Board.

Mr. Chairman and members of this committee, I welcome this opportunity, and I am honored and humbled to be considered to serve on the TVA Board of Directors. I appreciate your consideration of my nomination, and again, thank you for the opportunity to be before you today.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Klein follows:]

Senator Markey. Thank you. Thank you, sir.

Next, we are going to hear from Michelle Moore. Welcome.

STATEMENT OF L. MICHELLE MOORE, NOMINATED TO BE A MEMBER OF THE
BOARD OF DIRECTORS, TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY

Ms. Moore. Chairman Carper, Ranking Member Capito, Chairman Markey, Ranking Member Inhofe, and distinguished members of the committee, I am grateful for the opportunity to appear here before you today. My name is Michelle Moore, and I am honored to have been nominated by President Biden to the Tennessee Valley Authority Board of Directors.

I would also like to express gratitude to my mentors, Diane Dillon-Ridgely, Anthony Robinson, and Brother Mike Simmons, and to my Uncle Brad Knopp, who are here with me today, and to my dear husband, Linwood Boswell and my family watching online.

The same three Es that drive the TVA's mission, affordable energy, environmental quality, and economic development, have inspired my sense of purpose and defined my work for more than 20 years.

These days, I live in Midlothian, Virginia, but LaGrange, Georgia is and always will be home. I spent most of my time growing up there with my grandparents, who all lived on the same street near the cotton mills where they worked. There was no air-conditioning in the summertime and no heat in the bedrooms in the winter. We kept cool with a window fan and warm under three generations of hand-pieced quilts and hand-me-down blankets, and it was heaven.

But whenever Mam Maw and Paw Paw would have to turn on the furnace to keep the pipes from freezing, they would end up with a \$300 to \$400 dollar utility bill, which on their income was backbreaking. It wasn't because the utility rates were high, but rather because their homes, which I loved, were so inefficient.

I understand that the affordability of energy has to come first, whether viewed from my own experiences or through the history of TVA's formation to bring affordable power to the people of the Tennessee Valley. My work in the energy and sustainability fields has been built on this foundation, showing at every step along the way how energy and environmental quality go hand-in-hand with fiscal responsibility.

I learned how from a great business leader and teacher, Ray C. Anderson, the founder of Interface, Inc. When I joined his company in the late 1990s, Interface was a publicly traded Fortune 500 global carpet manufacturer based in my hometown, and Ray had just announced Interface's goal of becoming the world's first environmentally sustainable corporation.

The company's responsibility to its shareholders and to the thousands of families who depended on its success for their financial health was always at the core of Ray's commitment. The strategies we pursued included reducing waste, reengineering manufacturing processes, and redesigning products to be

remanufactured at the end of their useful lives. The results increased profits, reduced impact, built shareholder value, and expanded markets. Ray called it doing well by doing good, and I carry each and every lesson I learned from him with me still.

Making the business case, in fact, is how I helped build the U.S. and global market for green buildings. Demonstrating that healthier buildings use less energy and water, cost less to operate over the long-term, and don't cost more to build enabled the U.S. real estate and construction industries to transform themselves, creating value and supporting U.S. economic competitiveness in the global market.

It is the same approach I brought to leading the Federal Government's sustainability efforts as the Federal Environmental Executive. By pairing energy and environmental performance with economic responsibility, initiatives I led reduced the Federal Government's energy bill by a projected \$8 billion. I applied the same commonsense approach to leading President Obama's Infrastructure Office, which reduced permitting timelines for hundreds of billions of dollars of infrastructure projects without compromising environmental quality.

Today, I am focused on putting energy to work as a powerful strategy for economic development. Whether it is deploying rural energy efficiency programs that reduce bills for people like my grandparents while supporting local contractors and

training new entrants into the construction trades or developing solar and energy storage on church rooftops that provide energy savings and additional resilience to the surrounding community, energy remains an essential source of economic opportunity, just as it was in 1933.

Why I serve is more important to understand that what I have done. It is how I live out my faith and the commandment to love your neighbor as yourself, using what I know how to do, connecting energy with affordability, economic opportunity, and quality of life, to serve my community, including the people of the Tennessee Valley, with gratitude to God.

If confirmed, it would be my honor to serve in this same spirit as a member of the Board of Directors of the Tennessee Valley Authority.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Moore follows:]

Senator Markey. Thank you, Ms. Moore.

Finally, you, Mr. Wagner. Welcome.

STATEMENT OF BEN WAGNER, NOMINATED TO BE INSPECTOR GENERAL OF
THE TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY

Mr. Wagner. Thank you, Chairman Carper, Ranking Member Capito, Subcommittee Chairman Markey, and Ranking Member Inhofe, and distinguished members of this committee.

I thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today and for making today's hearing possible. I would also like to thank the President for nominating me to serve as the Inspector general of the Tennessee Valley Authority. I am honored to be considered for this opportunity to serve such a great institution like the TVA, an institution that has had such a tremendous impact on the quality of life for the people living in the Tennessee Valley Region.

I would also like to thank my family and colleagues for their love and support for me over the years. I would not be sitting here today without their unwavering support.

I spent most of my life living in the Tennessee Valley region. I have enjoyed the splendor of East Tennessee, fishing and boating in the beautiful TVA lakes, enjoying the recreational areas throughout the region. These are all areas where TVA profoundly impacts the people it serves and why I am proud of my long history with TVA and the TVA Office of the Inspector General.

I graduated from the University of Tennessee with an

accounting degree. Like many others, TVA was my first choice for employment after graduation. I was offered the opportunity to start my career at TVA at the Bellefonte Nuclear Plant in Scottsboro, Alabama. This was an exciting time for me. I was able to see first-hand the progress being made at one of the largest nuclear construction sites in the Country. I worked with tremendously dedicated individuals and was proud to be associated with TVA.

As my role changed an independent oversight function, I was proud to continue to serve TVA and the people of the Tennessee Valley by helping to identify fraud, waste, and abuse, and promote economy, efficiency, and effectiveness. In total, I spent 38 years with TVA, starting in 1979 until my retirement in 2017, working to improve TVA operations in one way or another.

In October 1985, the TVA Board of Directors created the Office of the Inspector General. This office was created in light of significant problems in the nuclear power program and the high volume of whistleblower complaints. I was lucky enough to be one of the first employees hired in this office, and I feel I contributed meaningfully to the successful startup of this crucial oversight function.

In 2000, Congress chose to make the Inspector General position a presidentially appointed one in order to ensure this function is performed with the highest level of independence.

Richard Moore, the first presidentially appointed IG, joined the office in 2003 and served as IG for 14 years. Since his tenure ended, interim leadership and former colleagues have ably led the TVA OIG for more than four years. Today, I am honored to be considered to become the second presidentially appointed IG at TVA.

TVA is charged with a critical mission: improving the quality of life for the people of the Tennessee Valley through providing low-cost power, environmental stewardship, and economic development. The TVA has some of the lowest power rates in the Country. TVA has been a catalyst to a dynamic economy, has been a leader in carbon reduction and has prevented billions of dollars in damage through flood control.

An Inspector General is charged with the critical mission of providing agency oversight by promoting economy, efficiency, and effectiveness of the agency and in identifying fraud, waste, and abuse. This requires IGs to perform their duties in a completely independent and objective manner. The work of the IG must be unbiased and completely factual.

Finally, none of this will be possible without the hardworking team at the TVA OIG. I have mentioned a number of reasons I am excited about this chance to serve, but the opportunity to work together with the experienced, dedicated staff in Knoxville, Chattanooga, Huntsville, and Nashville is at

the top of the list. If I am confirmed, it will be an honor to lead this team.

Thank you for this opportunity, and I am happy to take your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Wagner follows:]

Senator Markey. Thank you, Mr. Wagner, very much.

Now we will turn to the panel for questions. We will begin by recognizing the Ranking Member of the full committee, Ms. Capito.

Senator Capito. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank all of you for your willingness to serve.

I do want to amplify concerns of my colleagues who represent States in the TVA service territory. Senator Wicker, Leader McConnell and others are frustrated, as I am, that approximately a year has passed since the President nominated TVA Board members, but he has still not put forth a nominee for Kentucky or Mississippi. We raise this issue also, representation from Alabama is now needed because the pending nominee withdrew.

So the geographic representation on the Board is not new. We know that this is important to get good decisions and good decision making for the entire Board. I am troubled by the break with the President and urge the Administration to finally address these deficiencies by nominating qualified individuals from Alabama, Kentucky, and Mississippi.

With that, I would like to ask Ms. Moore a question, to ask about her views on fossil energy generation, which is 40 percent of TVA's power. Since your renomination this year, you have made your Twitter account private. But I had the opportunity to

review tweets that were publicly available on your account last year. The reason I bring this up is it is sort of an unvarnished view of what the opinions, what your true opinions would be, maybe might be more frank than what we can get in a hearing.

So very quickly, you tweeted the following in December of 2018 in response to a Wall Street Journal. The article was OPEC and Russia agree to cut oil output by 1.2 million barrels a day, lifting crude prices. You said, if we moved to EVs and kept mileage standards high in the transition, it wouldn't matter that foreign dictators collude to raise oil prices to make themselves rich, while impoverishing others, including Americans. Oil is like opioids, it keeps you sick and poor. I come from a State where opioids are not to be trivialized, or the use of them.

There is another tweet, this one is a similar tone. You tweeted, for example, that fossil fuels like oil and gas are not safe at any stage of their life cycle.

So how would you respond to that if you are going to serve on a board that has 40 percent fossil fuels as their power generation?

Ms. Moore. Thank you so much for your question, Senator. My first response to that would just be the spirit in which I would undertake any decisions or any consideration of future fossil fuel choices by TVA and TVA's current diverse mix. That

would be, number one, with a spirit of gratitude. I know that fossil fuels helped to fuel the Industrial Revolution, helped to bring countless families out of poverty, and also helped to bring us closer together by fueling our vehicles and fueling airplanes. If blessed to be confirmed to serve on the TVA Board of Directors, I would also approach any decisions absolutely in the spirit of the mission of the TVA, which is to balance economic development, environmental quality, and maintaining affordable energy, including resilient, reliable energy for the future.

Senator Capito. So when you say that oil and gas are not safe at any stage of their lifecycle, you are kind of going away from that in the statement that you are making right now?

Ms. Moore. I don't think that having gratitude for the good work that oil and gas have done for not just American society but human civilization is in conflict with looking toward the future where we have abundant, additional sources of energy and new technologies that are emerging that enable us to move forward.

Senator Capito. Thank you for that. I would point out that TVA, the purchase renewal over the last three years, hasn't even gone up. It is only at 5 percent. So that presents a challenge.

So for my final minute, I would like to yield to my

colleague from Iowa, Senator Ernst.

Senator Ernst. Thank you, Senator Capito.

Ms. Geer, as you stated in your written testimony, you believe one reason you should be confirmed to serve in the TVA, the Tennessee Valley, is because of your ability to "build relationships and work together." Is that correct?

Ms. Geer. Thank you, Senator. Yes, that is correct.

Senator Ernst. And you believe civility is a fundamental aspect of your role on the Tennessee Valley Board, if confirmed?

Ms. Geer. I absolutely do, Senator.

Senator Ernst. Yes, and thank you for answering those questions honestly. I think it appears to be a recent sentiment. If you will take a look at the tweet that we also found, that is me with darker hair, much shorter, in 2015. So you can see that Beth Geer tweeted out @FoxNews and @SenatorJoniErnst, "hideous." Can you explain that tweet?

Ms. Geer. I can't read it. I apologize. That is not a way of getting out of answering the question. But what --

Senator Ernst. I just read it to you.

Ms. Geer. I heard that. Sorry. But what was the quote?

Senator Ernst. The quote is, "The new Republican Congress also understands how difficult these past six years have been," from my State of the Union response in 2015.

Senator Markey. Senator Capito's time has expired, so we

will allow you to answer the question, but then we have to move on to the next witness, please.

Ms. Geer. Okay. I apologize if I offended you, and I appreciate your bringing it to my attention. I do in fact believe that civility is key, and I am sorry that I did not demonstrate that in your opinion with that tweet.

Senator Markey. And if Senator Ernst would like to --

[Simultaneous conversations.]

Senator Markey. You could return to be recognized on your own time.

Senator Ernst. I will wait, thank you, Senator.

Senator Markey. After Senator Inhofe and I are recognized, you will be recognized on your own time.

So now we are ready to move back to regular order. We just have a number of questions, standing questions, that have to be answered. I am going to work my way across all the nominees.

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

Ms. Geer. Yes, sir.

Senator Markey. Mr. Klein?

Mr. Klein. Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Senator Markey. Ms. Moore?

Ms. Moore. Yes, sir.

Senator Markey. Mr. Wagner?

Mr. Wagner. Yes.

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

Ms. Geer?

Ms. Geer. Yes.

Senator Markey. Mr. Klein?

Mr. Klein. Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Senator Markey. Ms. Moore?

Ms. Moore. Yes.

Senator Markey. Mr. Wagner?

Mr. Wagner. Yes.

Senator Markey. Do you know of any matters which you may or may not have disclosed that might place you in a conflict of interest if you are confirmed? Ms. Geer?

Ms. Geer. No, sir.

Senator Markey. Mr. Klein?

Mr. Klein. No, Mr. Chairman.

Senator Markey. Ms. Moore?

Ms. Moore. No, sir.

Senator Markey. Mr. Wagner?

Mr. Wagner. No.

Senator Markey. Thank you. Now we will begin with a round of questions. I would like to begin with a conversation to talk about clean energy and the TVA Board, which in my opinion has implemented some policies that may have made it harder for households and local power companies to make clean energy investments. I am deeply concerned about the impact that such decisions could have on affordability, long-term resilience of our energy system, and our meeting our targets to address dangerous climate change.

Ms. Geer, in your work on energy and sustainability, have you found that low-cost, clean energy can bring down costs, support grid resilience, and also support our climate and environmental goals?

Ms. Geer. Yes, sir, I have. I think that we are learning daily, pretty much, that clean energy cost is coming down, which I think is also an important factor to point out.

Senator Markey. I thank you. I am troubled by the TVA record. I will just give you a few numbers. In the United States last year, 13 percent of all electricity came from wind and solar, up from pretty much zero in 2009. So it is really growing fast. In Massachusetts, it was up to 16 percent were renewables, and 14 percent of all our electricity in

Massachusetts was solar last year. And we are not the perfectly sunny State. We are the perfectly cloudy State. Yet we figured out how to go to 14 percent for solar, and we continue to rise and rise and rise in Massachusetts.

We watch the ads, by the way, we watch the ads on TV on a daily basis that we are living in the wrong State, that we should be moving down to Tennessee and Alabama and all these sunny States, please leave Massachusetts where it is too cloudy, and move down there. Then those States, through the TVA, do not invest in renewables. In fact, the renewables -- this is unbelievable -- 3 percent in the Tennessee Valley Authority. That is it. It is a pretty sad number, to be honest with you. Very, very sad. If Massachusetts can do 14 percent solar, 3 percent wind and solar for the Tennessee Valley Authority is sad given the state of technological innovation that TVA has historically prided itself on.

How much better do you think the TVA should do, Ms. Geer, in renewables?

Ms. Geer. Thank you, Senator. I think we have to do a lot better. While I am not in a position right now to know about the entire asset portfolio, I certainly share your concern about the deployment of additional clean energy and of course, your concern about mitigating climate change. I think we have work to do. If confirmed, I can pledge to you that I will make it my

business to see that the Board considers all options.

Senator Markey. I think that is very important.

Mr. Klein, how do you feel about it? Three percent, maybe a percent and a half wind, half solar, what do you think the goals should be for the TVA?

Mr. Klein. Thank you, Senator. I understand your concern, but I don't know that I can say today what I feel like TVA's goals should be. However, I am committed to staying within the framework of the TVA Act and that is to provide affordable, reliable, sustainable electricity to the inhabitants of the valley.

Senator Markley. Do you think wind and solar are reliable and sustainable? The whole Country is now at 13 percent wind and solar. Massachusetts is up to 16 percent. Do you think, in your experience, do you think you can have a significantly higher percentage of wind and solar and meet those goals?

Mr. Klein. Yes, sir, I think we could. And I am committed to exploring renewable energy resources.

Senator Markey. How about you, Ms. Moore?

Ms. Moore. Thank you so much for the question, Senator. At this point, I don't have enough information about the specific path forward for TVA. But I know that it has pursued decarbonization, including the decarbonization commitments that TVA currently has made. We consider the decarbonization goals

that President Biden has set for the economy writ large as well. TVA's statutory mandate, to maintain that marriage between affordable energy, economic development, and environmental quality, it gives us a really beautiful and prescient framework for moving forward towards a future where renewables and new technologies, like energy storage, play a larger role in the TVA's portfolio.

Senator Markey. I would just hope that, I just don't like TVA falling so far behind the rest of the Nation. I grew up thinking TVA was the state of the art. It is pretty obvious that there is no movement here technologically. That is kind of the special message that you always receive about the TVA, and I just hope that that changes in the future. Because everyone else is moving that way, and the TVA seems like it is last in the whole Country. I am hoping that you are not happy with that. It is a real opportunity for you.

Let me turn now and recognize the Ranking Member, Mr. Inhofe.

Senator Inhofe. Before we start my time, it is my intention to give my neighbor over here my time, first round anyway. All right?

Senator Markey. Absolutely.

Senator Ernst. So, Ms. Geer, we will go back to the tweet. Maybe you have had time to refresh your memory a little bit. I

am not sure if you have made a habit of calling women that disagree with you hideous, or if it was simply an exception. But please let me be very clear. I stand by everything that I said in my State of the Union response back in 2015. Folks, this tweet is from 2015. You heard a lot about tweets in the former Administration. This is prior to that. This is not Iowa nice, folks, and I am calling you out.

So in my speech, I stated that we should move forward with the Keystone Pipeline, a decision that President Biden reversed, and which has played a role in the rising costs Americans pay at the pump. I talked about the importance of confronting terrorism, and threats like Al Qaeda and the Taliban, who under this Administration is now back in charge of Afghanistan. I discussed my own experience as the first female combat veteran to serve in the Senate, and how we must always honor and care for our veterans, something President Biden has touted as part of his unity agenda.

Ms. Geer, when you called me hideous, were you referring to my appearance, or to the views that I held and are held by many Americans across this Country?

Ms. Geer. Thank you for the question and for the clarification. Obviously, I was not calling you personally hideous, and certainly not your appearance. Again, I apologize if it came across that way. I mean no disrespect.

Senator Ernst. Ma'am, I will cut you off right there. How else could this come across? The word hideous to me only has one meaning. And the views I expressed in my State of the Union response were personal experiences. So maybe you didn't appreciate that I grew up on a small, rural farm in an economically disadvantaged area of Iowa. Maybe you didn't like that my mother had to put bread bags on my shoes when I went to school. Maybe you didn't like that. But a lot of Americans have had the same experiences that I have had.

So to call my personal views as hideous is an affront to half of America. So I have no further questions for you. But I appreciate your time and attention today. But I think in a world that is begging for civility, we should give them that civility. And I don't know that you can bring that to this Tennessee Valley Board.

So you know I am a no, and we will see how your nomination goes. I am ranked, just for benefit of those that are here, I am ranked as one of the most bipartisan Senators of either party in the last 25 years, out of all of the Senators that have served, one of the most bipartisan. I think it is important that we all work together. But when you are starting off on a foot like this, it is really hard for us all to work together.

Thank you, Ranking Member.

Senator Markey. Senator Inhofe?

Senator Inhofe. Yes, let me continue on, I would say to Ms. Geer, Ms. Moore, and Mr. Klein, that I referenced in my opening statement the reports that the TVA plans to expand investment in natural gas-powered generation. I think we are all aware of that now. A lot of statements were made about that. Now I am going forward. The TVA must maintain fossil fuels as part of its power supply mix, so that the people in the region have the affordable and reliable electricity.

I am concerned, a lot of times emotions set in, and I have been guilty of it myself, and people are put in a corner that they really don't like to be in. I would like to ask the two of you primarily if you stand by the previous statements that you made, the quotes that you made. Well, you know what the quotes are.

Ms. Geer. Sir, I am sorry, I don't think I understand the question. I am not being disrespectful, but do you mind asking it again?

Senator Inhofe. I don't mind it a bit.

Ms. Geer. Thank you, sir.

Senator Inhofe. Just a second. Ms. Geer, in June of 2015, you implied I was a hater. Well, we won't get into the personal attacks. But several individuals were on that list. Ms. Moore, in June and July of 2020, you tweeted in part, "I am overjoyed for the defeat of all those disgusting oil and gas pipelines."

Is that a statement that you agree with today? Or would you like to retract that statement?

Ms. Moore. Thank you so much for the question, Senator. Two things that I would share. And I do stand by my answer before. When we look to our history, we can be very grateful for everything that oil and gas has done for our civilization.

Senator Inhofe. Yes, I am sorry, there won't be time for a long answer to this.

Ms. Moore. Of course.

Senator Inhofe. Is that yes or no?

Ms. Moore. It is a both and statement, sir.

Senator Inhofe. Oh boy. You want to give a both and too?

Ms. Geer. Well --

Senator Inhofe. Let me ask you this. If you were to be confirmed in this position, you are going to be working with fossil fuels. And that is a given. Is this any kind of a problem that you have where you would be using this position to try to change the bureaucracy or actually work within the confines that are given you?

Ms. Moore. Senator, thank you very much for your question, and thank you for the follow-up and for the clarification as well. If am blessed to be confirmed for the position, I would serve in that role in absolutely adherence with the statutory guidance that we have, both in terms of the mission of the TVA

and the responsibility that we have as Board members. While we have, TVA has said, and President Biden has said, and many other utilities and leading corporations have set decarbonization targets, there are pathways that we have to take to get there that are going to be unique to each portfolio and in alignment with the places that are served.

And the spirit of service that I would bring to the role if confirmed would be what would guide me. That includes both respect for the pathway that TVA is on and for the role that fossil fuels currently play in the portfolio, and also for the communities where those plants are located, including the people who work there, and making sure that if and as TVA transitions away from fossil fuels that all the families who depend on those jobs are supported and served as well. Very much in alignment with the guidance that we have from a statutory perspective and how to serve, and also in terms of my own personal commitment rooted in my faith to make sure that all the work that I do is reflecting love for my neighbors.

Senator Inhofe. All right. I think your sentiments, how you would masquerade these over a period of time, I don't know. But again, you have expressed yourselves. My problem is, and just kind of bear with me for a minute. If you have these feelings about part of the mix, one of the things that we have insisted on is that we have the whole mix. It is going to take

all of the above. So that is one that you would be forced to live with, isn't it? You don't have a choice. You don't have an option on that. Is that a problem with you?

Ms. Moore. Sir, my guiding light and my north star, if I were blessed to be confirmed for the role, would be the statutory mandate that we have. That is not a matter of my personal feelings or my personal commitments or positions or statements I may have made with regard to my personal feelings or other responsibilities that I have had. My chief responsibility, if I were blessed to be confirmed, is to the people of the Tennessee Valley, in making certain that any decision that I made or any decision that I participate in, prioritizes the reliability and the resiliency and the affordability of energy.

Senator Inhofe. That is fine. That is fine. Do you agree with that, Beth?

Ms. Geer. Yes, sir, thank you very much for the chance to address that. Of course, I do also agree with my colleague, Michelle, that as a Board member, if I am confirmed, that my primary responsibility would be in helping the TVA carry out its mission of providing the three Es, environmental stewardship, energy that is safe, reliable and resilient, and of course, environmental stewardship.

With respect to the pipeline issue, if I could just speak

about that for a second. I have worked in a couple of instances over the last few years where pipelines have been proposed to be located in places where the folks who would be most impacted and most affected were not given a voice. So I do believe that my experience in those types of situations would be helpful in giving those people a voice.

As a member of the Board, should I be confirmed, I strongly believe that it is imperative that the people who are most impacted have a voice and that they are listened to. That was context, if that is helpful.

Senator Inhofe. Very good. Thank you very much.

Ms. Geer. Thank you, sir.

Senator Markey. So we will come back for an additional round of questions. We are joined by Senator Cramer, we are still on the first round, so we recognize him at this time.

Senator Cramer. Thank you very much, Senator. Thanks to all of you for being here.

I am just going to talk on one topic briefly, and ask each of the three of you up for the TVA to respond to it. As you know, Congress, over the years and the decades, has committed lots of dollars to broadband buildout, particularly in underserved and unserved areas. In fact, in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Act, we added I think \$65 billion just to that, to try and, again, make sure that every rural community in

America has good libraries, good access to education, commerce, medicine. We need to have that final mile filled in wherever at all possible.

I have heard some rumblings, and I am going to confess right up front, to me that is what they are at this point. But I want to do a little discovery for you all, or I want you all to do a little discovery for me, and maybe answer this question. I have heard reports that some of the TVA local power companies have delayed or inhibited broadband buildout by restricting or significantly raising costs of access to their utility poles. My four years on the Energy and Commerce Committee over in the House, this was an ongoing discussion. It has become more of a discussion. Obviously, TVA, like a lot of utilities, has shall we say, beachfront property and access for this infrastructure to the poles would be great.

So really, the only way to have the type of reliable high-speed internet and educational and economic health, as I said, opportunities, is with high-speed broadband. So through its authority over the local companies, and it is in your distribution contracts, you would have authority to require the LPCs to offer time and cost-effective pole access. My understanding is TVA has been reluctant to exercise that authority. I understand that. But I just want to know, if confirmed, will each of you commit to quickly examining the pole

access issue further, and ensuring that TVA is doing everything in its power to advance federal broadband deployment priorities to benefit, obviously, the entire Country but especially the communities under your jurisdiction? I will start with you, Ms. Geer.

Ms. Geer. Yes, sir, thank you, Senator. I absolutely commit to looking into it further, and if confirmed, to learning more. I share your concern about broadband. After moving back to Tennessee to my rural hometown about 15 years ago, I had dial-up. So I am totally with you. I do believe that broadband is almost a basic necessity for most folks now, both in their personal and private life. So yes, sir.

And I do believe, again, I don't know the specifics just yet, but the TVA is playing an important part as a convenor amongst the appropriate parties to make sure that broadband is, that people have access to broadband in the TVA service area.

Senator Cramer. Thank you. Mr. Klein?

Mr. Klein. Thank you, Senator. The TVA Act does not address broadband. The Act mandates that TVA provide electricity. However, I am certainly not opposed to working with our local power companies. In my opinion, I believe that would be the best avenue to address broadband.

I say that; it just so happens that I worked at the Electric Power Board of Chattanooga, distributor of TVA. We had

the first smart grid installed in the United States in Chattanooga. So I know it can be done.

Senator Cramer. You make an important point about the leadership role that your utilities at every level, but the smaller the community, the bigger the role, right, in facilitating what you are talking about.

I would just add that TVA may not have that charge in their Act, but they have as part of their mission statement the advancement of economic and social well-being of the community.

Mr. Klein. Yes, I agree with that. If confirmed, I will support TVA working with the local power companies to install broadband throughout the seven-State region, up to and including the rural areas that we have in the Tennessee Valley.

Senator Cramer. Thank you. Ms. Moore, you have four seconds, but I will bet the Chairman will be benevolent.

Ms. Moore. Yes, absolutely, and thank you very much.

Senator Cramer. Thank you.

Senator Markey. I love this subject, if I can go into the way-back machine a little bit, it was 1978, and all the cable companies, especially in rural America, but urban increasingly, too, they wanted to deploy cable. But the telephone company and the electric companies were saying, well, put up your own poles. So there would be three poles going down the street.

So we actually passed a law in 1978, Al Gore and I were on

that subcommittee, the Telecommunications Subcommittee, to say, no. The existing poles have to rent to the cable companies. We don't need a third pole going down every street in America. Then that telescoped in time frame to have cable, it was only 10 percent of America that had cable at that time.

Senator Cramer. After that it was trenches. Everybody had to go in the same trench.

Senator Markey. Yes, then we had to pass laws to say, you have to share the trench once that trench is built. So it is working smarter, not harder, which is really what all of this is. My mother used to say, Eddie, you have to learn how to work smarter, not harder. She would say that right after she said, We are going to donate your brain to Harvard Medical School as a completely unused human organ.

[Laughter.]

Senator Markey. So all she was saying was, please use your brain, try to be working smart here.

Senator Cramer. That is all I really had.

Senator Markey. So it is all there already, and we can have the revolution without the struggle.

Senator Cramer. There you go. Thank you all.

Senator Markey. I appreciate it.

Do you have something else to add, Mr. Klein? It looked like you did.

Mr. Klein. Well, if I may, because what you said hit the nail on the head.

Senator Markey. About my brain?

[Laughter.]

Senator Markey. My mother would agree with you.

Mr. Klein. I can't speak to that.

[Laughter.]

Mr. Klein. I am sure you are a lot smarter than I am. I wouldn't get into a debate with that.

But again, perhaps I didn't get my point across as I meant to. But that is what I was saying, the local power companies and distributors have the system in place. We have already got the distribution systems built throughout the valley. Like you said, Mr. Chairman, we don't need to add a third power pole. We have the poles in place. The system is in place. We just have to add an additional fiber optic cable. Doing so, then we can get broadband throughout the valley.

I know it can be done.

Senator Markey. Excellent. And by unanimous consent, I would like to put in the record that Mr. Klein is a very smart guy. No objection, so ordered.

[Laughter.]

Senator Markey. I thank you, Senator Cramer.

Let me move on a little bit. My father was a vice

president of an electrical union when he was a younger man.

Mr. Klein. I am glad to hear that.

Senator Markey. I am proud to be his son. I have seen directly the benefit of what union membership has on our Nation's workers and their families.

It is why I found troubling that in 2020 TVA tried to outsource more than 200 of those union jobs during the pandemic. While that effort was temporarily blocked, I remain concerned about efforts to offshore American union jobs. Can you speak to that, Mr. Klein?

Mr. Klein. Yes, sir. Thank you, Senator. I am a working man. That is all I have ever been, and I haven't forgotten where I came from and never will. So I am not in favor of offshoring good-paying TVA jobs. I would never commit to that happening.

However, you mentioned outsourcing as well. We currently have agreements in place on the property of TVA to outsource some work through these construction and maintenance agreements. But it is not the intent, nor would I agree that it would harm the current annual workforce. Those agreements are only meant for peaks, for peak construction, peak maintenance. Those are through the building trades, and they are good union paying jobs. The TVA annual jobs are good paying jobs, some of the best in the valley. I would never agree to do anything to harm

that, nor the employees of TVA.

Senator Markey. That is great. My father was a hardworking man. He had a funny accent, though, he sounded a lot like me.

[Laughter.]

Mr. Klein. You and I, we talk a little different.

Senator Markey. Yes, but you don't have an accent the way my father does.

Mr. Klein. I am doing pretty good following you.

[Laughter.]

Senator Markey. If confirmed, you would prioritize efforts to keep TVA jobs local and support the use of union labor?

Mr. Klein. Absolutely.

Senator Markey. In recent years, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission has detailed how TVA management allowed for a chilled work environment in which employees perceived that they were discouraged from raising safety concerns to their employer or to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. In 2019, I wrote to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission about the need to take this seriously and ensure that the TVA was fixing this issue.

For context, TVA operates roughly 5 percent of the nuclear sites in the United States. But in 2019, TVA employees represented 42 percent of the allegations brought to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission for resolution.

So let me ask you, Mr. Wagner, as you noted in your testimony, the TVA Board created the TV Office of Inspector General in response to problems in the TVA's nuclear program and a significant amount of whistleblower complaints. If confirmed, Mr. Wagner, would you commit to working with the TVA's whistleblower protection coordinator to foster an environment that empowers and encourages nuclear plant employees to come forward with nuclear safety concerns?

Mr. Wagner. Thank you for the question. Absolutely. That has always been a high priority in the Inspector General community as well as at TVA. We take those complaints very seriously.

Senator Markey. TVA operates about a dozen landfills of coal ash, which have previously led to tragic spills of toxic material into surrounding waterways. Last year, TVA moved to pause plans to remove coal ash to a burial site in southeast Memphis in order to gather community input. However, TVA's CEO subsequently indicated that Memphis still represents the best location to bury 3 million tons of coal ash.

To all of the Board nominees, would you commit to prioritizing stakeholder engagement particularly around important issues around environmental health and justice? Ms. Geer?

Ms. Geer. Yes, sir, absolutely I will.

Senator Markey. Mr. Klein?

Mr. Klein. Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Senator Markey. And Ms. Moore?

Ms. Moore. Thank you so much, Senator. Yes, sir, thank you.

Senator Markey. You were going to add?

Ms. Moore. Yes, sir, I would. In terms of stakeholder engagement, NEPA, of course, is a statutory responsibility of TVA as a federal agency. It gives strong guidance there, as does the statute to us as Board members to engage the public.

Senator Markey. Thank you. The key to any agency is accountability and oversight.

Mr. Wagner, if confirmed, how will you use your decades of experience at the TVA to uncover and prevent waste, fraud, abuse, and ensure TVA objectives are being met effectively and efficiently?

Mr. Wagner. Thank you for the question. I would seek to continue the work that the OIG does in a very broad spectrum, through its audits and investigations. I would continue that work and be very risk-based, and do program evaluations necessary and make recommendations to improve those programs.

Senator Markey. Thank you.

Back to energy efficiency, which again is working smarter, not harder, the goal has to be for us to ensure that the TVA is

a national leader in technological innovation, low-cost power, and environmental stewardship. Energy efficiency programs hit all three of those priorities. They are innovative, reduce cost, and consumers benefit and the environment is benefitted as well.

While the TVA has acknowledged that energy efficiency is critical to achieving a least-cost energy mix, in recent years the Authority has cut, cut important energy efficiency programs and incentives. Ms. Moore, do you see cost-saving energy efficiency programs as something that you should be supporting as a Board member at the TVA, if you are confirmed?

Ms. Moore. Thank you so much, Senator. Energy efficiency and reducing energy burdens, particularly for those residents of the valley who earn the least incomes, is critically important and absolutely in alignment with the guidance that the TVA Act gives TVA from a mission perspective, and also for our responsibilities as Board members, if blessed to be confirmed. Rural communities, in particular, particularly low-income residents in rural communities, carry some of the highest energy burdens across the entire Nation, which is rooted, of course, in a lack of energy efficiency, not necessarily in high rates. Also bringing attention to those issues, both in the spirit of TVA's responsibility as a technological and environmental quality leader, and for the social benefit of its communities

would absolutely be a priority for me.

Senator Markey. Mr. Klein, in your expertise working on electric systems, how much emphasis do you believe we should be giving to energy efficiency work, using new technologies, new strategies to reduce the need for any of the electrical generation in the first place?

Mr. Klein. Mr. Chairman, I don't have all the information that I would need to professionally address that. However, I am committed to working within the framework of the TVA Act, and that is providing affordable, reliable, and sustainable energy, which up to and includes renewables. So I am not afraid of new technology. I am certainly open to looking at new technology as we move into the future to make life better.

Senator Markey. I appreciate that. But of course, the less money we have to spend on building new power plants is the more money that is left in the pockets of ordinary consumers. So the smarter we are at avoiding the need to build these plants, the better it is for the consumer out there, so they keep more money in their pockets.

I urge you, Mr. Klein, to look at that and think about those poor taxpayers out there, those poor ratepayers that first have to pay for the new facility and then they would have to pay for the higher electricity rates that are out there because of the need for that additional generation capacity that was

avoidable right from the beginning. So just to protect them on both fronts.

Mr. Klein. Sir, I will, and I take note of what you are saying.

Senator Markey. I appreciate that, sir.

I would also like to ask unanimous consent to submit for the record data that shows the power sector is quickly moving toward zero-emission energy sources aligned with President Biden's climate goals. This includes data from the Smart Electric Power Alliance, an organization that tracks power sector commitments to reduce emissions.

According to the Smart Electric Power Alliance, 69 percent, I will say that again, 69 percent of U.S. accounts are served by a utility that has committed to 100 percent carbon reduction target, or a utility owned by a parent company that has a 100 percent carbon reduction target. I hope that is the goal of TVA as well.

I ask unanimous consent to have this report included in the record. Without objection, so ordered.

[The referenced information follows:]

Senator Markey. Again, my goal is to just keep the TVA cutting edge, the way I was raised in Massachusetts to think about it.

My grandfather worked in a mill in Lawrence, Massachusetts. They had dammed the Merrimack River in order to create that industrial revolution in Lowell and Lawrence. That is where my grandfather worked, along that river with the dam that was constructed by those companies in the State of Massachusetts.

Then in the 1930s, my grandfather obviously paid a lot of taxes in order to build the same dams, but down in the south. So he was taxed to pay for all those dams that are down there that are famous dams, even today, and I am sure he was proud to do it, to pay for all of those dams.

That was cutting edge at the time. Because obviously he was working in a mill in Lawrence, Massachusetts. It was cutting edge.

But again, as Massachusetts has moved along, up to 16 percent renewable energy, 14 percent solar, so too is my expectation as the grandson that the TVA continue to move as well. Because I know how proud he was back then, and I just would like this generation to be equally proud of this legacy that TVA has, and that you have a chance to embellish dramatically and not allow the most powerful force in nature, stasis, to block that kind of change which is now affordable,

sustainable, and compatible with electrical generation and saving the planet and creating jobs at the same time.

With that, this hearing will come to an end, unless there are other questions that you want to have asked.

This is like a religious ceremony, a Senatorial hearing. So I had to open the way I did and close this way as well, or else history records that the hearing was not conducted in a proper way. So before we adjourn, housekeeping, I would like to ask unanimous consent to submit for the record a variety of materials that include letters from stakeholders and other materials that relate to today's nomination hearing.

[The referenced information follows:]

Senator Markey. Senators will be allowed to submit written questions for the record through the close of business on Wednesday, April 20th. We will compile those questions and send them to our witnesses. We will ask the four witnesses to reply to those questions by May 4th. If nothing else, it will expedite your consideration for a vote out of this committee, and then on the Floor of the United States Senate. So we would ask for you to comply with that.

We thank each of you for your willingness to serve our Country in each of your individual capacities. We are more than willing to work with you in the weeks ahead to try to telescope the time frame to get you on the job, so you are working for the TVA and for our Country.

Thank you all so much.

[Whereupon, at 3:48 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]