

National Coalition to Senators: No Vote on FERC Commissioners Until Hearings on FERC's Abuses and Investigations Into Trump's Connections to Russia Conclude

President Trump's Recent Firing and Threatening of former FBI Director James Comey Deepen the Cloud of Suspicion Over the Administration and FERC Commissioners Directing An Agency Deeply Tied to National Security.

WASHINGTON, DC – May 15, 2017 – A coalition of national and regional organizations sent a letter today to Senator Lisa Murkowski, chairman of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, asking that the Committee postpone hearings for President Trump's nominees to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). Senator Murkowski has been urging the Trump Administration to move quickly with FERC commissioner nominations. The organizations continued their call for the committee to delay nominations in order to pursue a hearing into multiple and documented reports of FERC misusing its authority regarding the approval process for pipelines. FERC's rubber stamping of pipelines negatively impacts the health and safety, property values, and livelihoods of people nationwide.

The coalition is also calling on Senator Murkowski to postpone the hearings until an investigation into the Trump Administration and campaign's potential conflicts of interest and ties to foreign governments can be concluded. FERC plays a key role in securing and maintaining the nation's electric power grid and energy infrastructure overall, which is an important part of the country's national security. With a cloud hanging over the president that has only deepened with his firing of and threats against FBI Director Comey, it would be prudent for the Senate to investigate President Trump's actions prior to considering any nominees his administration puts forward the organizations assert.

The full letter to Senator Murkowski can be found here: <http://bit.ly/2qK7RaU>

"Would that Congress act with the same urgency in conducting hearings on FERC, a rogue independent commission, that Senator Murkowski is using to hold confirmation hearings for two controversial candidates nominated by a president whose actions against democratic norms have put him at the center of a national firestorm," said Karen Feridun, Founder, Berks Gas Truth.

"FERC has already demonstrated itself to be an agency that misuses its authority to strip the American people of their legal rights and to lightly turn the power of eminent domain over to private pipeline corporations. It is untenable to think that this President who has unknown business and financial ties would appoint 4 of 5 FERC Commissioners," said Maya van Rossum, leader of the Delaware Riverkeeper Network which has been among the organizations leading national campaigns challenging FERC's abuses. **"The Senate should hold off on advancing any new Commissioners and instead focus on securing congressional hearings to investigate the abuses carried out by FERC and identify needed reforms so that no matter who appoints Commissioners, our communities and environment will get due protection and regard."**

"Any FERC Commissioner nominated by Trump and approved by the Senate will be subject to behind-the-scenes pressure from Trump," said Ted Glick, organizer with Beyond Extreme Energy. **"This is clearly intolerable. The president could demand they take actions which support his business or political interests or face public ridicule from him. Until our current Constitutional crisis is resolved, there should be no hearings on Trump's FERC nominees."**

“FERC currently acts as an undemocratic commission that tramples the rights of the people it is supposed to serve,” said Green America Co-Executive Director Todd Larsen. **“The Senate will only compound the damage that FERC does if it moves forward with confirmation hearings for the nominees of a President who has clearly demonstrated that he has no respect for democracy.”**