

# Senate panel eyes FERC picks in crowded lame duck

Jeremy Dillon, E&E News reporter    Published: Monday, November 9, 2020



Federal Energy Regulatory Commission nominees Mark Christie and Allison Clements during their confirmation hearing. Francis Chung/E&E News

Congressional lawmakers may be eyeing the exits, but a series of late nominations to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and other posts may still get a final push in the lame duck.

Attention to FERC will likely increase after former Chairman Neil Chatterjee's demotion last week (*[E&E News PM](#)*, Nov. 6). Any momentum would provide an opening for nominees Democrat Allison Clements and Republican Mark Christie.

The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee held a confirmation hearing in September but has yet to vote on the duo (*[E&E Daily](#)*, Oct. 5).

"It is something that I have consistently said: FERC has a lot of work, and we want to make sure that they've got the people, the commissioners that they need to do the work," Chairwoman Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska) told E&E News last month.

Murkowski said she anticipated scheduling a vote on the nominees as soon as she got a better handle of the Senate schedule after the election.

A committee vote may be the easy part. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) is keen on using limited floor time to confirm judicial nominees, now that President Trump is heading for the exits and the chamber has yet to approve any fiscal 2021 spending legislation. Murkowski is also eyeing action on energy legislation.

With government funding set to run out on Dec. 11, the expectation is the Senate will remain in session until at least that date.

Approving the FERC nominees would give Republicans a majority on the panel until at least the end of June, when Chatterjee's term is set to expire.

After that, the commission could be deadlocked 2-2 — a prospect that could hamstring the Biden administration's clean energy agenda for the commission.

Democrats may want to stall on Clements and Christie for that very reason. Even though Democrats have long pushed for a bipartisan pairing, they may want to give President-elect Joe Biden as much leeway as possible. ENR Committee ranking member Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.) did not return a request for comment.

Renewable energy advocates, in response to Chatterjee's demotion, said they want the Senate to act on the nominees before the 116th Congress adjourns.

Gregory Wetstone, president and CEO of the American Council on Renewable Energy, said confirming Christie and Clements would "restore a full, bipartisan complement of five commissioners so FERC can continue its mission of ensuring reliable, efficient and sustainable energy."

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