

Committee sends Trump FERC picks to Senate floor

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The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee today approved Trump nominees to fill vacant posts at the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, the five-member independent agency charged with overseeing major natural gas pipeline projects and electricity markets.

The nominations of Democrat Allison Clements and Republican Mark Christie now head to the Senate floor, where a vote could come in December.

Chairwoman Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska) commended President Trump for nominating a bipartisan pair and stressed the importance of ensuring FERC is fully staffed, though she noted that it's too early to say whether the floor's schedule will allow a vote next month.

"Nominees for FERC are among the most consequential that come before our committee," she said. "One of my top priorities is ensuring this committee does our job to enable these nominations."

Five Republicans voted against Clements, comprising Sens. John Barrasso of Wyoming, Steve Daines of Montana, John Hoeven of North Dakota, Mike Lee of Utah and Cindy Hyde-Smith of Mississippi. Sen. Mazie Hirono of Hawaii was the lone Democrat to vote against Christie's nomination.

Ranking member Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.) said both Clements and Christie are "incredibly well qualified to serve on the commission."

He said Clements has more than two decades of experience dealing with FERC policy as a longtime energy attorney, and Christie was elected three times to serve on Virginia's State Corporation Commission.

He also noted that Christie is a native West Virginian. "That makes him even more qualified," Manchin said.

The ENR Committee held a largely noncontroversial confirmation hearing for the pair in September, and observers expect the duo to be confirmed ([*E&E Daily*](#), Sept. 17).

The White House named the two in a surprise July announcement amid lingering questions about whether the president would address the FERC vacancies before the elections ([*Energywire*](#), July 28).

Clements is a longtime energy attorney who most recently served as head of the clean energy market program at the Energy Foundation. She previously worked with the Natural Resources Defense Council on FERC-related issues.

During Christie's 16-year tenure as Virginia's top utility regulator, he garnered a reputation as outspoken, a deep thinker and a firm adherent to strict constructionism, the legal philosophy that limits judicial interpretation ([*Energywire*](#), Aug. 4).