

Cooper Bemoans Delay Approval Of Utility Commission Appointees

By Administrator
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The following is from the Office of the Governor

On May 1, Governor Roy Cooper sent the legislature three non-controversial nominees for the North Carolina Utilities Commission: Senator Floyd McKissick, Kimberly Duffley and Jeff Hughes. Despite multiple pending cases to set the rates North Carolinians will pay for electricity, the legislature has yet to approve these nominees. To date, they have yet to receive a confirmation vote in both chambers, with only McKissick receiving a vote in the House in July.

“Each of these nominees has met with legislators, answered their questions and presented their qualifications. The people of North Carolina deserve a complete commission to protect their pocketbooks and keep the work of the utilities commission on track,” said Governor Cooper.

The issues the commission considers, including rate cases, tend to be lengthy, complex and require a great deal of work by experts named to the commission to ensure that rate-payers are adequately represented. When utilities’ request an increase in what they can charge, they need review in a timely way to ensure the business of keeping the lights on is not hampered. This can not happen with three of seven utilities commission seats empty.

While North Carolinians wait and the commission’s work is limited by having only four sitting members, the legislature is taking another break to try to figure out how to force their partisan agenda despite North Carolinians clear priorities to raise teacher pay and expand Medicaid.

WHY THE DELAY?

Despite days and weeks of no votes and no action in the state legislature, these non-controversial, well-qualified nominees have yet to get a confirmation vote. Each of the nominees has spent time meeting with state lawmakers to share their credentials and answer

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questions. There has been no question of their qualifications or ability to serve fairly as commissioners.

The Republican leadership's pattern of stalling and inaction while watching for chances to assert their partisan agenda is opportunistic at best and obstructionist at worst. This is the second time the legislature has delayed action on Governor Cooper's utilities commission nominees. In 2017, the legislature adjourned without considering Charlotte Mitchell and ToNola Brown-Bland's nominations until the following year. There is no reason to delay highly qualified people from sitting on the utilities commission that regulates the safety and affordability of water and electricity for all North Carolinians.

A PLAN FOR A CLEAN ENERGY FUTURE

Governor Cooper continues to lead North Carolina toward a clean energy future, building a plan that includes an expansive and inclusive process to modernize how we deliver electricity. Last month, he unveiled the Clean Energy Plan, that set short-term and long-term goals to increase the use of clean energy and modernize how North Carolina regulates electricity.

Delaying appointments to the utilities commission also delays important goals in the Clean Energy Plan that will combat climate change, grow jobs and ensure reliable, safe electricity for our state. The plan assumes a full commission will be in place to rule on critical questions that only the Utilities Commission can consider.