

New FERC Commissioner Urged to Prioritize Environmental, Energy Justice

Additional Comments From Conservation, Clean Energy, Energy Justice Groups

“As founding manager of Carolina Biodiesel, LLC, I believe that we as a nation can rise to the challenge of securing our clean, renewable and just energy future and do better than Willie Phillips. We need to keep fossil fuels in the ground and need people who can see that vision and make it happen with wartime speed. We must zero out our carbon pollution immediately. The science and planet do not lie. We need leaders, not polluters in positions of power.”

— John Marc Dreyfors, manager, Carolina Biodiesel, LLC

“As D.C.’s Public Service Commission chair, Phillips supported a program approved last December to replace the city’s aging natural gas pipeline system over the next 34 years. It’s legerdemain intended to keep the fossil fuel industry in business while calling it climate action. He should be a perfect fit at FERC.”

— Karen Feridun, founder, Pennsylvania-based Berks Gas Truth

“Mr. Phillips has a strong background in the energy industry. We hope that as major players in the old energy paradigm begin to chart a renewable future that Mr. Phillips will make a similar pivot and provide leadership toward a green energy future.”

— Michael Gilroy, CEO, Sungage Financial LLC

“We must build on the limited progress made in Scotland at the COP26 talks to make major on-the-ground changes to move quickly to a renewable energy future. That transition must prioritize the needs of those communities most severely impacted by climate change and environmental pollution. Our children and grandchildren are depending on us.”

— Andy Mager, coordinator, Syracuse Cultural Workers

“States like Virginia that struggle to address climate change legislatively look to our federal government agencies to set strong environmental and energy justice standards. Binding federal commitments to phase out fossil fuel usage and accelerate a just transition to renewable energy that protects communities from harm are long overdue. Americans are already suffering the effects of climate change. The historic damages we have seen this past year from extreme weather will only increase. However, if we act with conviction now, we can maintain this country and planet for future generations. Green New Deal Virginia Coalition urges Willie Phillips to be an environmental champion and to help secure a just transition to renewable energy for this country.”

— Lee Anne Williams, codirector, Green New Deal Virginia Coalition

“We need a commissioner at FERC who comes from a background of working to resolve our carbon addiction, not one who has helped prolong it. Though strong in the diversity department, the reality is Willie Phillips’ track record shows little real action to facilitate the necessary move toward clean energy. Sure smells like greenwashing.”

— Purly Rae Gates, founder, Clean Energy Now Texas

“Commissioner Willie Phillips must prioritize environmental and energy justice at FERC by rejecting harmful projects like pumped storage proposals that would flood wildlife habitat and endanger communities below the pumped storage reservoir, in addition to building a huge dam that would destroy additional wildlife habitat, as well as staging areas above and below the dam with more roads through roadless and wilderness areas. These projects are especially damaging in western U.S. mountains experiencing drought, where reservoir surfaces lose water through evaporation and where power transmission lines lose power for every foot they are away from the power user. In addition, power transmission lines discharge and cause wildfires and clearing trees and chaparral from land will warm and dry the ground and environment. All of this exacerbates the global climate crisis.”

— Ara Marderosian, executive director, Sequoia ForestKeeper

“As the founder and president of a grassroots organization that formed to fight off a huge gas pipeline and a mega-sized compressor station sited for the African American community of Union Hill, I have learned a lot about gas infrastructure, the climate crisis and the workings of FERC. FERC did little to protect our interests through what we felt was a grossly failed public process. Nor did they ever look at the cumulative impacts of multiple pipelines on the climate crisis we are all facing. It was apparently about negotiation of business with large powerful corporations. Our Earth is not for sale, our communities are not expendable, our children’s and the future of all life on earth depend on robust policies to minimize effectively our carbon footprint. We need to do better and the time is past now.”

— Chad Oba, president, Friends of Buckingham

“To avoid the climate catastrophe we are careening into, we must fundamentally change the way we use and produce energy in this country. We need FERC commissioners who are committed to making these changes while protecting our environmental justice communities, not commissioners who are dedicated to protecting the fossil fuel industry.”

— Jane Williams, executive director, California Communities Against Toxics

“FERC is meant to function as an independent regulatory body to ensure safe and reliable energy for our country, while holding energy industries accountable to the climate crisis and our need to transform our energy systems. Willie Phillips has yet to demonstrate independence or a desire to place public interests before private investments. Instead, Mr. Phillips has a stronger record being an asset for the current energy status quo and fossil fuels. Communities across the country are demanding energy democracy and a just transition away from fossil fuels and will be watching FERC and Commission Phillips vigilantly to ensure that they do what's best for the planet and the people, not what's best for corporations.”

— Dominic Chacón, organizing coordinator, Community Action Works

“The warning signs are everywhere, with the latest IPCC report being the most dire yet. The only planet we call home is rapidly moving toward an irreversible spiral of climate cataclysm, unless we take radical action now. We urge Mr. Phillips to prioritize the climate over profit and the fossil fuel industry.”

— Igor Tregub, chair, California Democratic Party Environmental Caucus

“It is long past time for FERC to be more than a rubber stamp for the fossil fuel industry. Alongside billions of Christians around the world, I believe that God entrusted the world to our care and doesn’t give us license to pillage and destroy it. I urge Willie Phillips to chart a new course with FERC — one that protects the web of life and averts climate catastrophe.”

— The Rev. Dr. Margaret Bullitt-Jonas, missionary for creation care, Episcopal Diocese of Western Massachusetts & Southern New England Conference, United Church of Christ

“Willie Phillips will need to begin his term as FERC commissioner by proving he recognizes the threat to our existence due to climate change caused by the oil and gas industry. Our coastal communities in Texas have long suffered health concerns due to prolonged exposure to air and water pollution from these facilities, and long-term environmental impacts to our bays, estuaries and the Gulf of Mexico.”

— Joanie Steinhaus, Gulf program director, Turtle Island Restoration Network

“I worked in oil and gas for eight years and it was my job to calculate profits. I watched how the industry leveraged relationships and played in the gray areas of regulation — or absence of regulations — to make millions of dollars at the expense of our planet and marginalized communities. We need a commissioner who recognizes the problematic systems that are in place and will take bold and urgent actions to move toward a just and renewable society. Our children and future generations are looking to us to turn this ship around before it’s too late.”

— Harmony Cummings, Resilient Denver and founder, The Green House Connection Center