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NARUC Task Force Releases Emergency, Disaster and Pandemic Response Resources at Annual Meeting

Publications Recommend Actions for Improved Energy Systems Resilience and Lessons from COVID-19

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (November 8, 2021) — The National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners Emergency Preparedness, Recovery, and Resiliency Task Force today announced the release of two new publications that examine key regulatory considerations for emergency preparedness, disaster response and recommend specific actions for state public utility commissions to enhance energy system resilience to major disruptive events.

The two publications, *Federal Funding Opportunities Guidebook* and the final report of the EPRR Task Force's special Subcommittee on COVID-19 *Lessons Learned from the Ongoing Response to the COVID-19 Crisis*, were released at NARUC's 133rd Annual Meeting and Education Conference, being held this week in Louisville. Members of the Task Force presented a briefing of its findings over the past year at the meeting's opening general session, led by EPRR Chair Kimberly O'Guinn, a commissioner at the Arkansas Public Utility Commission.

The EPRR Task Force was formed in April of 2020 in response to recent extreme weather events, natural disasters and the national emergency from the COVID-19 pandemic. These events have heightened the nation's collective awareness of the need for access to energy and the importance of ensuring the continued delivery of essential energy services. The final 'lessons learned' style report of the Subcommittee on COVID-19 details key lessons learned for state commissions from the ongoing response to the COVID-19 crisis. The scope of the analysis includes workforce issues, changing business practices, low- to moderate-income customer impacts, regulatory responses, utility financial approaches to pandemic response and other key challenges.

"This report is a valuable resource for state public utility commissions considering how they might update their emergency response plans and capabilities for a public health emergency," said Washington Utilities and Transportation Commissioner Ann Rendahl, chair of the EPRR Task Force's Subcommittee on COVID-19. "We all continue to grapple with the ongoing impacts from the pandemic. However, it is important that we take note of the lessons we have already learned, apply them to how we conduct business now and better prepare ourselves in the event of potential future public health crises."

The EPRR Task Force's Federal Funding Opportunities & Construction Standards Subcommittee produced the *Federal Funding Opportunities Guidebook*, which details eight priority federal funding opportunities, key takeaways for state utility regulators concerning those funding opportunities and program eligibility requirements. The guidebook will serve as a reference for NARUC members who can play an important role in encouraging fellow states

agencies and regulated utilities within their jurisdiction to take advantage of available federal funding for disaster response and hazard mitigation.

“This guidebook provides state regulators with a foundational understanding of the various federal funding opportunities available to states in the event of a major disaster,” said Mississippi Public Service Commissioner Brandon Presley, chair of the FFOCS Subcommittee. “Additionally, there are several federal assistance programs that allow for investments to enhance energy resilience in our states. It is critical that state public utility commissioners be aware of these types of federal funding outlets and encourage their states to pursue investments that ensure reliable and efficient essential utility services.”

“*Lessons Learned from the Ongoing Response to the COVID-19 Crisis*” was authored by CPI staff William McCurry with contributions from the Subcommittee on COVID-19 and broader EPRR Task Force and is available on NARUC’s website at bit.ly/NARUCLessonsCOVID19. The *Federal Funding Opportunities Guidebook* was developed by Converge Strategies, LLC, as a subcontractor to NARUC, with contributions from the FFOCS Subcommittee and broader EPRR Task Force. The guidebook is available at <https://bit.ly/FFOCSGuidebook>.

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About NARUC

NARUC is a non-profit organization founded in 1889 whose members include the governmental agencies that are engaged in the regulation of utilities and carriers in the fifty states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. NARUC’s member agencies regulate telecommunications, energy, and water utilities. NARUC represents the interests of state public utility commissions before the three branches of the federal government.