

**MEMORANDUM**  
**On the Creation of a Commission Chairs' Council**

On April 29, 2021, the NARUC Executive Committee approved a motion to permit NARUC President Paul Kjellander, pursuant to Title I, Section 19 of the *Policies and Procedures of the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners*<sup>1</sup>, to establish a *Commission Chairs' Council*. President Kjellander was authorized to proceed with establishing the committee.

**Background:**

The Covid 19 Pandemic disrupted normal meeting schedules for NARUC which would have included a retreat for Commission Chairs. Under normal circumstances this event allowed in-person opportunities for chairpersons from multiple state commissions to gather and discuss specific topics relevant to the unique roles and additional responsibilities associated with the positions they hold. It was determined that the value of these in-person meetings should not be lost due to the pandemic and an opportunity for an alternative meeting scenario was created.

The first informal virtual meeting for Commission Chairs was established in the fall of 2020. It was well attended and suggested a need for additional opportunities to address ongoing concerns that are unique to Commissioners who serve in this capacity. Subsequently, several follow up meetings were scheduled, and a host of additional topic areas were identified and addressed.

It became apparent that addressing the needs of Commission Chairs was important enough to demand more attention than could be offered through a once-a-year in-person retreat. The nature of the in-person retreat resulted in limited access to a broader number of Commission Chairs. Travel expenses, scheduling conflicts, and other space considerations restricted attendance for these live events. While these live retreats were always at capacity and well received, the number of Commission Chairs who could benefit from the dialogue and collaborative nature of the retreats was extremely limited. It should also be noted that the lack of a formal committee structure often resulted in the hiring of a consultant to facilitate the in-person event. As a further point of interest, when commissioners were surveyed following the live events the results of these inquiries suggested that the event added value and the frequency of these meetings should be evaluated.

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<sup>1</sup> *Policies and Procedures of the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners*, Section 19. Requirements for Formation of Special Committees Affecting Two or More Standing Committees, at pages 5-6, online at: <http://www.naruc.org/About/Proposed-.Policies-and-Procedures-Final-November-2013-docx.pdf>. The focus and scope of the Commission Chair's Council cuts across all of NARUC's existing committee's and cannot be appropriately lodged in any existing committee.

One of NARUC's primary missions is to provide education that can assist its members in the ultimate goal of serving in the broader public interest. Through the virtual meetings described above, it became clear that the needs of Commission Chairs could be better served by a more formal committee structure. As an example, it is not uncommon for a new commissioner to also be assigned the role as Commission Chair by either their appointing authority or via election by their colleagues. Not only does the new commissioner have the responsibility of learning the job of being a regulator, but they have the additional burden of serving as chair.

A benefit from developing this Council recognizes that a key role of Commission Chairs is to control the budgetary purse strings. If NARUC can develop a stronger relationship with Commission Chairs by providing beneficial outreach and educational materials, Commission Chairs will gain a greater appreciation for the overall value of NARUC as well as develop a better understanding of the additional resources NARUC has to offer. This could result in Commission Chairs being in a better position to recommend that their staff and colleagues take advantage of and participate in the many educational opportunities NARUC provides including rate school, New Commissioner Orientations, standing committees and staff subcommittees, and NARUC's Summits and Annual Meetings.

By creating a more formal Commission Chairs' Council, NARUC can better provide educational and career development opportunities for a segment of its membership that, due to a variety of cost considerations and the lack of an organizational structure, has previously been underserved.

### **Commission Chairs' Council Goals and Responsibilities:**

A primary goal of the *Commission Chairs Council* will be to provide educational and career development opportunities for NARUC members who serve as Chairs/Presidents of their State Commissions. The topics and dialogue will focus on material that is unique to the administrative and human resource considerations associated with the responsibilities of serving as Commission Chairs. It can include, but is not limited to case management considerations, staffing concerns in a competitive environment, the evolution of organizational structures at commissions in response to the dynamic changes occurring within the utility sector, interacting with State Governor's Offices and Legislatures, and navigating an agency through emerging issues such as the COVID pandemic.

The Chairs' Council will work to develop appropriate resource materials for Commission Chairs. Additionally, the Council will identify and implement outreach opportunities that will engage Commission Chairs and strengthen the relationship between Commission Chairs and NARUC. The Council will also develop a meeting schedule that will include virtual as well as face-to-face meetings. This Council will

work with its members to identify and explore emerging topics that will shape the future of how Commissions operate under the governance of Commission Chairs.

**Task Force Duration:** Two year with options to renew the Charter based on the preference of the NARUC President with the approval of the Executive Committee.

**Proposed Members:** The Council will be open to all Commission Chairs and will be appointed upon request by the President of NARUC. The President will designate a Chair of the Council and up to 2 Co-Vice Chairs.

**Staffing:** Staff for the Council will be designated by the members of the Council with the input and formal appointment by the President. The NARUC staff that will assist the Council will be as designated by the Executive Director. The Council can solicit for additional volunteer supporting staff from NARUC member commission staffs. The Council should consider coordinating with NARUC planning staff to hold its in-person meetings in conjunction with regularly scheduled NARUC Educational Summits and Annual Meetings.

**Proposed Charter:** The *Commission Chairs' Council* is chartered for a period of 24 months, as of this 30th day of April, 2021, to assist in managing NARUC's efforts in responding to and addressing the needs of Commission Chairs.

The Council will organize panel discussions and educational roundtables that can occur virtually and at NARUC meetings. The Council will also serve as a vehicle to help identify areas where NARUC leadership can improve opportunities that will benefit Commission Chairs.

The Council will also work to identify the need for any additional resource material such as desk manuals and educational/training offerings that will compliment Commission Chairs in their effort to successfully execute their responsibilities.

The Council will have its first meeting at the upcoming July NARUC meetings in 2021. The Council will report directly to the NARUC Executive Committee.