



N A R U C
National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners

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Contact: Regina L. Davis, 202-898-9382, rdavis@naruc.org

NARUC Establishes Natural Gas Access and Expansion Task Force
Group will be led by Pennsylvania's John Coleman and Mississippi's Brandon Presley

Washington—National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners President Robert F. Powelson and its Executive Committee have established a new Presidential Natural Gas Access and Expansion Task Force. Pennsylvania Commissioner John Coleman and Mississippi Commissioner Brandon Presley have been appointed as co-chairs, with North Dakota Commissioner Julie Fedorchak serving as vice-chair. The task force will be charged with developing best practices and recommendations regarding natural gas service for underserved and unserved areas of the country, including, but not limited to rural communities.

Many rural communities, which comprise residential, industrial and commercial customers, lack access to low-cost natural gas because of infrastructure issues—local distribution lines and gas utility services are unavailable. These communities must rely on bottled propane, heating oil and other more expensive fuels. The Natural Gas Access and Expansion Task Force will analyze the potential demand for the service extension and expansion of natural gas infrastructure and identify alternative or unconventional approaches to reaching these unserved and underserved areas.

“I am pleased to co-chair this task force. Too many Americans live in communities that lack the basic access to natural gas service—a situation that we hope to remedy through the work of this task force,” said Commissioner Presley.

“I look forward to working with my colleagues on this important task force,” said Commissioner Coleman. “These infrastructure issues that cause added expense, inconvenience or other burdens to consumers who lack natural gas service need to be resolved.”

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission regulates the rates set for transportation and storage, as well as the operating terms and conditions of interstate pipelines. However, within state boundaries, the gas distribution through pipeline systems owned by local gas distribution companies is regulated by NARUC's members. Moreover, NARUC passed a resolution during its recent 2017 winter meeting on Natural Gas Pipeline Siting Review, member Information Sharing and Tool Kit Initiative, which specifically resolves to ensure continued member education and initiatives on issues relating to the appropriateness of expedited review of interstate natural gas pipeline siting. Other previous resolutions note the need to “explore, examine, and consider adopting alternative rate recovery mechanisms as necessary to accelerate the modernization, replacement and expansion of the nation's natural gas pipeline systems.”

“The work of this task force will be extremely beneficial to NARUC members and their communities, as we undertake this comprehensive study of residential, commercial and industrial access and expansion of natural gas distribution infrastructure,” said President

Powelson. “We will better understand the demand for natural gas service in unserved and underserved areas, the barriers and obstacles to such access and expansion (e.g., consumers’ inability to pay for access or conversion to natural gas service) and provide relevant economic information on the costs and benefits to expand natural gas distribution infrastructure.”

During the eight-month term of the task force, the group’s main focus will be to prepare an analytical report that will:

- study current access, expansion and service extension policies for underserved and unserved areas;
- examine the need for access and expansion including case studies and review of the barriers and obstacles to such access;
- recommend potential mechanisms to address the benefits and opportunities for access and expansion and identifies alternative or unconventional approaches to reaching unserved and underserved areas; and
- compile a national “best practices” collection on natural gas access and expansion to underserved and unserved areas.

Also, the task force will coordinate with NARUC’s Committee on Gas to help identify opportunities for engagement at NARUC meetings on this issue and collaborate with NARUC-affiliated organizations to collect best practices.

The following state commissioners have been invited to serve on the task force: Ken Anderson (Texas), Stephen Bloom (Oregon), Julie Brown (Florida), Robert Hayden (Massachusetts), Kim O’Guinn (Arkansas), Norman Saari (Michigan), Dianne Solomon (New Jersey), Nick Wagner (Iowa) and Dallas Winslow (Delaware). There are three vacant positions to be filled at the discretion of the NARUC President. The Committee on Gas Chair Stan Wise (Georgia) and co-Vice Chair Diane X. Burman (New York) will serve as active liaisons to the task force.

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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.