

**Commissioner Ann Rendahl, Washington State Utilities
& Transportation Commission**

INSTALLATION REMARKS

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 2025

**UNITING REGULATORS, HARMONIZING IMPACT:
ADVANCING RELIABLE AND RESILIENT INFRASTRUCTURE**

Good morning everyone! I am looking forward to working with all of you over this next year.

Before I share with you my focus for the next year, I'd like to recognize my family – my husband, Paul, and my children: Sarah, Sam, and Nathan, as well as Sarah's husband Chris, Sam's partner Marie, and Nathan's partner Erin. They were all here yesterday for the election, but not all are able to join us today.

Thank you for being patient and understanding all of the years that I was travelling, or working late or after dinner, or on the weekend. And thank you, Paul, for holding down the home front and making it possible for me to serve as a state commissioner and participate in NARUC.

The reason that I am travelling or working late is because I have a passion for the work that we do as state commissioners.

Our work is complex and demanding but never dull, and the issues are not getting any easier – in fact our work appears more and more on the front page. NARUC is here to support us and provide the guidance, training, and fellowship that we need.

In that vein, newly elected 1st Vice President Jehmal Hudson, 2nd Vice President Katie Sieben and I have selected a three-year theme to focus on how NARUC can support commissioners and staff, and how we can work collaboratively and in partnership with each other.

The theme is - Uniting Regulators, Harmonizing impact.

Consistent with this theme, I will also be focusing this year on advancing reliable and resilient infrastructure, because it does not matter in which state or region you serve, we are all facing the need to build and maintain utility infrastructure –

electric, gas, water and communications –to serve increasing customer demand for service affordably, and to address reliability issues and challenges to that infrastructure.

How do these themes work together?

As one of the nation’s oldest national associations in continuous operation, NARUC has a responsibility to serve regulators in every state and territory, addressing the concerns and issues facing all of us.

When we are all working together, NARUC can have a greater impact nationally and in our respective states and regions.

Because the most critical issues for regulators, customers and utilities right now are reliable and affordable service. Focusing on the necessary and cost-effective infrastructure to serve customers will allow us to meet the moment of increasing demand for service, but also, ensure safe, reliable and affordable service for customers. Because customers are at the heart of what we do.

So, what does uniting regulators, harmonizing impact mean, and why is it important for NARUC?

By focusing on “regulators,” the theme highlights the people and institutions that drive decisions in regulating utilities—state commissions, commissioners, and staff. It underscores NARUC’s central mission of serving the public interest by improving the quality and effectiveness of public utility regulation, through empowering state utility regulators to lead collaboratively on national challenges.

“Uniting Regulators” reflects the need for:

- Coordination across all utility sectors – electricity, gas, water, and communications;
- Peer learning and sharing information among state commissioners and staff; and
- Federal-state collaboration, such as through the FERC-NARUC Federal-State Current Issues Collaborative, the FCC federal-state joint task forces, and partnerships with the Department of Energy and other federal agencies.

“Harmonizing Impact” means aligning the diverse actions of state utility regulators to collectively strengthen the national utility landscape. It is not about uniformity – but about coordination, mutual reinforcement, and strategic

alignment—so that the decisions made in one state complement and support broader national goals, while still respecting state and regional differences.

"Harmonizing Impact" positions NARUC to be more than just a convener—it becomes a strategic force multiplier. In short, "harmonizing impact" means ensuring that the work of every state commission is part of a shared, coherent effort to meet the nation's utility challenges and opportunities—together.

What do I mean by advancing reliable and resilient infrastructure?

Much of our focus at NARUC has been and will remain on energy issues – the critical need for electric generation and transmission and gas pipelines and supporting infrastructure to meet growing demand.

However, we also need to focus on the water and telecommunications industries. These industries also face significant infrastructure challenges to ensure safe, reliable, and affordable service to customers.

Together, this year, we will explore the infrastructure needs for all utility services, how the industries support and rely on each other, as well as the challenges for both building the necessary infrastructure and for keeping it safe, resilient and reliable.

To meet the growth in demand for electric and gas service for data centers, onshoring industry, and associated economic development, we will continue to see a need for more electric generation of all kinds, more pipes and wires to transport energy, as well as more transformers and compressors and other related equipment.

Until we build all of this, we need to be able to do more with what we already have to keep the grid reliable, using grid enhancing technologies, such as power flow controllers and dynamic line ratings, as well as continue to focus on demand side solutions, including demand response, and harness the power from existing and future distributed energy resources.

However, we also need more pipes and wires for communications and water service. Data centers, industry and all customers rely on both industries to drive economic development in communities – urban and rural.

Communications drive the digital transformation of this country, through broadband expansion and artificial intelligence, as well as the technology that makes utility networks more efficient and responsive.

Water utilities provide clean, safe drinking water – necessary for life – as well as wastewater services, and cooling for data centers, electric generation and communications equipment.

For all of these industries, regulators face a variety of challenges and headwinds, which we will also focus on this year, including:

- Disputes over permitting, siting, and questions about who should bear the costs.
- The availability of a skilled workforce to build and maintain the necessary infrastructure,
- The complexity of grid resilience, as well as connectivity of defense critical infrastructure, and
- Pressures on reliable and resilient infrastructure, including the constant risk of cybersecurity, physical attacks, and the increasing risk of extreme weather and catastrophic events.

This includes extreme heat, cold, wind, flooding, and fire, yes wildfire – as you have heard me talk about over the last year, and which I will continue to focus on this next year to promote NARUC’s wildfire workbook to address wildfire risk.

During tomorrow’s general session, I’ll share the work that NARUC staff and a small but mighty working group have put together as a resource for states. The members of the committee included commissioners, staff, and utilities from regions across the country, as well as representatives of NASUCA, NASEO, the National Conference Of State Regulators, Department of Energy, and others.

The first chapter of the workbook will be released and available by tomorrow.

We will continue this work, releasing the remaining chapters in December and January, and through next year, at the February Winter Policy Summit with a workshop to discuss how to keep this work relevant as states and utilities address this continuing risk.

All of these reliability challenges and risks have significant impacts on utilities’ ability to finance and invest in the critical infrastructure this country needs and puts further pressure on affordability.

Each of the utility sectors has its own specific challenges around the speed of growth and development, whether it is:

- Available generation, siting, and permitting; interconnection, forecasting growth, and supply chain for electric and gas utilities;
- Pole attachments, communications towers, energization and the threat of vandalism and theft of fiber and copper for communications; or
- The need to rebuild failing systems, and contamination issues due to forever chemicals, lead, copper, and cyanotoxins for the water industry.

Clearly, we have a lot of work to do...

We will focus on all of this and more in our work over the next year to advance reliable and resilient infrastructure – in general sessions, committees and work sessions – providing an opportunity for all of us to share what is working, what is holding us back, and where we need to work together – to unite and harmonize NARUC’s impact to ensure safe, reliable, and affordable utility service for all customers.

Thank you – I’m looking forward to working with you.