August 6, 2021

President Joseph R. Biden Jr.
1600 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.
Washington, DC 20001

RE: APPOINTMENT OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL AND ENERGY JUSTICE CHAMPION TO BE THE NEXT COMMISSIONER TO THE FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION

Dear President Biden,

The climate emergency is worsening each day, and communities of color and low-wealth communities are disproportionately bearing the brunt of toxic fossil fuel pollution, crushing energy burdens, and climate disasters. Your appointment of a Commissioner to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) is a critical opportunity to address these multiple crises. We, the undersigned 466 environmental and energy justice, faith, social justice, and conservation organizations spanning 41 states and Washington, D.C., respectfully urge you to appoint an environmental and energy justice champion who can be instrumental in transforming our fossil fuel and racist energy system into a renewable, resilient, and just one through FERC authorities.¹

It is crucial that the new commissioner is committed to: (1) opposing new and phasing out existing fossil fuels and false solutions like gas and carbon capture and sequestration; (2) championing and integrating renewable energy onto the grid, particularly decentralized systems like rooftop and community solar and storage that advance energy democracy and climate resilience; and (3) ensuring that issues of environmental, energy and ecological justice pervade all of the Commission’s decision-making, including open and transparent public processes led by a fully staffed and funded Office of Public Participation.

We believe there are excellent candidates who fit these criteria. We specifically urge you to consider Mr. Daniel Blackman, Ms. Marquita Bradshaw, and Ms. Nidhi Thakar, who are examples of the type of leadership on environmental and energy justice that your next nominee for FERC commissioner must embody. To note, our coalition was able to identify these individuals as potential nominees with far less time and resources than the White House. We encourage the White House to widen its search, include these candidates, and consider the implications of a transformative choice for FERC Commissioner.

Mr. Blackman has demonstrated in his run for the Georgia Public Service Commission, and in past positions, that he will fight for communities that have been harmed first and most by fossil fuel pollution and is committed to accelerating a just and equitable transition to 100% clean, renewable energy. Similarly, Ms. Marquita Bradshaw is a community and environmental justice leader who has demonstrated through

¹ In a June letter, over 300 groups urged you to appoint a new FERC commissioner who is “committed to following climate science, stopping new fossil fuel infrastructure, and transitioning the country to 100% renewable energy.”
her years of grassroots activism a commitment to reforming systemic injustices that stand in the way of energy democracy and ensuring equal access to affordable, safe, and renewable energy for all communities. She has fervently opposed the Byhalia Pipeline and fossil fuel infrastructure—and is the only candidate we are recommending who has fought a FERC-reviewed pipeline project and won. Ms. Nidhi Thakar has advocated for electrification and California’s acceleration to zero carbon resources as a Chief of Staff at the California Public Utilities Commission and has experience with the Biden-Harris team as the former National Co-Chair of Clean Energy for Biden. See Addendum for further background on these candidates.

With deadly heat waves, megadrought, and more extreme wildfire seasons across the country, the climate emergency is here. As the International Energy Agency has stated, we simply cannot afford any new fossil fuel projects if the world is to have any reasonable chance of staying below 1.5°C and preventing the worst possible harms of climate catastrophe. FERC has the power to approve or deny permits for new pipelines and export facilities. Given that authority, it is critical that you appoint a new commissioner with a demonstrated commitment to phasing out fossil fuels, and who has a track record of addressing and reducing pollution in communities that have been harmed first and most by the extractive economy, including communities of color, Indigenous communities, and low-wealth communities.

At the same time, we need a commissioner who will advance a just and equitable transition to 100% renewable energy and prioritizes energy democracy and resilience. FERC commissioners possess substantial oversight over grid modernization, integration of distributed energy resources, and inter-state electricity transmission vital to your Build Back Better agenda. They can champion proven renewable technologies—especially decentralized systems like rooftop and community solar and storage—as well as prioritize energy efficiency measures and energy affordability, all of which bring significant economic and resilience benefits to impacted communities.

Your decision regarding the next FERC commissioner will have profound and lasting consequences, especially until 2030 as we near the scientific deadline to avoid climate catastrophe. We need a new FERC commissioner who will center science, justice and equity, and end the era of dirty gas and other fossil fuels. We urge you to appoint the candidates recommended or other similar champions as the next commissioner of FERC.

Sincerely,

[Signatories begin on later pages.]

CC: Ms. Anita Dunn, White House
    Mr. Ron Klain, White House
    Ms. Catherine Russell, White House
    Ms. Gina McCarthy, White House
    Mr. Ali Zaidi, White House

Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, U.S. Senate
Senator Joe Manchin, Chairman of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee
Senator John Barrasso, Ranking Member of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee
Senator Ron Wyden
Senator Maria Cantwell
Senator Bernie Sanders
Senator Martin Heinrich
Senator Mazie Hirono
Senator Angus King
Senator Catherine Cortez Masto
Senator Mark Kelly
Senator John Hickenlooper
Senator James Risch
Senator Mike Lee
Senator Steve Daines
Senator Lisa Murkowski
Senator John Hoeven
Senator James Lankford
Senator Bill Cassidy
Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith
Senator Roger Marshall
ADDENDUM

Daniel Blackman, Executive Committee Chair of the Sierra Club’s Georgia Chapter, is a longtime environmental justice advocate and leader and recently ran for Georgia’s Public Service Commission on a platform of energy and utility justice. During his electoral campaign, Mr. Blackman also pledged to reject fossil fuel money and advance a just transition to clean and renewable energy. Mr. Blackman is a longtime advocate for families, impacted communities and the climate. He was appointed by the chairman of the National Wildlife Federation to serve on the Environmental Policy Commission to address renewable energy and public health issues. He is also a board member of the Georgia ACLU.

Marquita Bradshaw, Executive Director of Sowing Justice, has decades of experience as an environmental justice leader and community advocate. She recently ran for the Tennessee U.S. Senate seat and is the first Black woman to be a major party nominee in that race. Ms. Bradshaw was an early signer of the Green New Deal and has been a fervent proponent of renewable energy and climate justice and has opposed--and won in shutting down--the Byhalia Pipeline and opposes fossil fuel infrastructure. She serves as Environmental Justice Chair for the Tennessee Chapter of the Sierra Club and as a board member of the African American Environmental Justice Network. She has also worked with the Mid-South Peace and Justice Center, the AFL-CIO, and received the Dick Mochow Environmental Justice Award.

Nidhi Thakar, Director of Resource and Regulatory Strategy and Engagement at Portland General Electric, is a clean energy and environmental leader and lawyer with decades of regulatory and administrative experience working in federal and state government, as well as the private and non-profit sectors. She previously served as the National Co-Chair of Clean Energy for Biden, Chief for Strategy and External Affairs for the Office of California Public Utility Commission President Michael Picker, Senior Advisor to the Executive Director of Loan Programs at the U.S. Department of Energy, Deputy Director of the Public Lands Project at the Center for American Progress, an associate with Perkins and Coie LLP, where her portfolio included advising clients on matters before the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and the permitting of onshore and offshore renewable energy projects, a Legislative Aide to Rep. Berkley, and Law Clerk at the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.
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URGING FOR ENVIRONMENTAL AND ENERGY JUSTICE CHAMPION TO FERC

August 6, 2021
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LETTER FROM 465+ ORGANIZATIONS
URGING FOR ENVIRONMENTAL AND ENERGY JUSTICE CHAMPION TO FERC

August 6, 2021

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*Candidate*  
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*Wildlands Program Director & Staff Attorney*
**WESTERN ENVIRONMENTAL LAW CENTER**

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**350 KINGSTON NEW YORK**

Daniel Helmer
*Supporting Organizer*
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*Communications & Outreach Director*
**ALLIANCE FOR A GREEN ECONOMY**
LETTER FROM 465+ ORGANIZATIONS
URGING FOR ENVIRONMENTAL AND ENERGY JUSTICE CHAMPION TO FERC

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BRONX CLIMATE JUSTICE NORTH

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CATSKILL MOUNTAINKEEPER

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CHURCH WOMEN UNITED IN NEW YORK STATE

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CITIZEN ACTION OF NEW YORK

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COALITION TO PROTECT NEW YORK

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ELMIRANS & FRIENDS AGAINST FRACKING

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MILFORD DOERS/RESIDENTS OF CRUMHORN MTN

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Glenn Jacob
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NEW YORK INTERFAITH POWER & LIGHT

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XR KINGSTON NEW YORK

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LETTER FROM 465+ ORGANIZATIONS
URGING FOR ENVIRONMENTAL AND ENERGY JUSTICE CHAMPION TO FERC

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