



FERC Podcast Transcript
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Interview with Chairman Chatterjee

Mary O'Driscoll: Welcome to FERC's Open Access. I'm Mary O'Driscoll. Our guest today is Neil Chatterjee, the new Chairman of FERC.

Chairman, you've been here about a week, having been nominated by President Trump in the spring and confirmed by the U.S. Senate on August 4. Congratulations, and welcome.

Neil Chatterjee: Thank you. It's been a crazy week.

Mary O'Driscoll: So, you're chairman of the Commission, now is this a temporary thing or what?

Neil Chatterjee: I'm serving as chairman until Kevin McIntyre is confirmed. I am excited about the opportunity and take the responsibility seriously. I'm going to work hard, and I look forward to working with my colleagues and the outstanding FERC staff through this transition.

Mary O'Driscoll: So given that you have the gavel until Kevin McIntyre is confirmed, what is your vision for FERC?

Neil Chatterjee: Of course, my first priority is to get started on the accumulated backlog. I heard about it all through the Senate confirmation process. There's a lot of consternation out there, and I'm committed to working with them, my colleagues, to get after it right away. I'm also committed to the resilience and reliability of our electric system. These are essential to national security. And to that end, I believe baseload power should be recognized as an essential part of the fuel mix. I believe that generation, including our existing coal and nuclear fleet, need to be properly compensated to recognize the value they provide to the system.

You know, I'm a Kentucky native. I've seen firsthand throughout my life how important the contribution coal makes to an affordable and reliable electric system. Last year, coal provided over 80 percent, 80 percent, of the electricity in Kentucky. As a nation we need to ensure that coal, along with gas and renewables, continues to be part of our diverse fuel mix. I'm also looking forward to following the President's charge to create jobs and stimulate economic growth through infrastructure. I believe working through the backlog, especially evaluating the infrastructure projects before the Commission, really could help spur economic development. I've been also fascinated by technology and the innovation in the energy sector. I'm looking forward to exploring what opportunities exist for these new technologies. And of course, electric reliability and cybersecurity will

always be a priority for me and for the Commission as a whole.

Mary O'Driscoll: Both you and Commissioner Rob Powelson are brand-new here, and you're joining longtime Commissioner Cheryl LaFleur, so now we finally have a quorum. So how do you expect your relationships to be with your new colleagues?

Neil Chatterjee: I am so looking forward to working with them. Commissioner LaFleur has just done an amazing job holding the Commission together through these quorum-less months. She's really been the glue. We've known each other for a number of years, we are both New England Patriots fans – or at least, I'm a Tom Brady fan – I know she appreciates that. And beyond that, I really know that I'll profit from her knowledge and experience.

Commissioner Powelson and I have also known each other for a number of years and we've developed a real rapport, going through the confirmation process together. It's a unique experience, the Senate confirmation process, and I can tell you, having survived it, thankfully, it will bond you together, and Rob and I really formed that bond, and I think it'll help us and the Commission in the years ahead.

Really, I think we all bring different strengths to the Commission, and I'm confident we'll be a great team. And I'm really looking forward to working with this team.

Mary O'Driscoll: OK, about that accumulated backlog you mentioned earlier. How do you plan to attack that backlog of orders that need votes by the Commission?

Neil Chatterjee: So, I have to tell you, if not for just the incredible work and commitment and dedication of Commissioner LaFleur and the FERC staff, I would be really daunted and worried about the task ahead of us. But Commissioner LaFleur and the staff have done so much of the groundwork in preparing for the return of a quorum that I feel very confident that we'll be able to work through it. I look forward to talking with my colleagues and staff to triage the orders and start going through them. It's going to take some time, but because of all of the tremendous work that is already been done to date, we'll work through them as soon as we can. I think we'll be able to achieve that.

Mary O'Driscoll: Okay. Well, thank you so much for stopping by Open Access.

Neil Chatterjee: Thank you for having me.

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