

NO. 15A776

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

Basin Electric Power Cooperative, et al.

Applicants,

v.

United States Environmental Protection Agency and Regina A. McCarthy,
Administrator, United States Environmental Protection Agency

Respondents.

**Reply in Support of Application of Utility and Allied Parties for
Immediate Stay of Final Agency Action Pending Appellate Review**

**DIRECTED TO THE HONORABLE JOHN G. ROBERTS, JR.,
CHIEF JUSTICE OF THE UNITED STATES AND
CIRCUIT JUSTICE FOR THE UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS
FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA CIRCUIT**

Christina F. Gomez
Counsel of Record
Garrison W. Kaufman
Lawrence E. Volmert
Jill H. Van Noord
HOLLAND & HART LLP
555 Seventeenth Street, Suite 3200
Denver, CO 80202
303-295-8000
cgomez@hollandhart.com

Emily C. Schilling
HOLLAND & HART LLP
222 South Main Street, Suite 2200
Salt Lake City, UT 84101
801-799-5800

Patrick R. Day
HOLLAND & HART LLP
2515 Warren Avenue, Suite 450
Cheyenne, WY 82001
307-778-4200

Samina M. Bharmal
*Admitted in New York only,
practicing under DC bar member
supervision*
HOLLAND & HART LLP
975 F Street NW, Suite 900
Washington, DC 20004
202-654-6915

Counsel for Basin Electric Power Cooperative

Additional counsel listed on signature block

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To the Honorable John G. Roberts, Jr., Chief Justice of the United States and Circuit Justice for the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit:

1. Applicants seek this Court's intervention because EPA's rule is extraordinary. EPA concedes its lack of expertise in regulating power generation¹ but nonetheless has ordered that the nation's power sector be transformed in a very short time. EPA not only lacks statutory authority for its action, but also fails to understand (or to acknowledge) what its action is doing to the power sector. As a result, the utilities will be hard pressed to ensure the lights won't go off.

EPA urges that a stay is extraordinary and that Applicants did not cite cases granting a stay under these precise circumstances. EPA Resp. at 19-20. But this is not an ordinary case. Never before has EPA claimed such sweeping authority to reorganize an entire sector of the economy in the name of reducing emissions. Never has EPA interpreted its charge under Clean Air Act (CAA) Section 111 to encompass not just requiring the reduction of plant level emissions through installation of pollution control technology, but also the forced retirement or curtailment of many existing sources coupled with the forced investment in new alternative sources that are not even regulated by Section 111. EPA's action is both unprecedented and unfounded, and it warrants this Court's intervention.

¹ EPA, Response to Public Comments on Proposed Amendments to National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants for Existing Stationary Reciprocating Internal Combustion Engines and New Source Performance Standards for Stationary Internal Combustion Engines, at 50, Docket EPA-HQ-OAR-2008-0708 (Jan. 14, 2013) ("The issues related [to] management of energy markets and competition between various forms of electric generation are far afield from EPA's responsibilities for setting standards under the [Clean Air Act].").

2. The very *purpose* of the rule is to “aggressive[ly] transform[] ... the domestic energy industry.”² EPA claims the rule simply builds on existing trends. EPA Resp. at 38-39, 64. But the rule undisputedly will cause far more plant retirements and curtailments than would occur in its absence. EPA predicts this, and the utilities and others have confirmed it.³ Without the rule, coal-fired units would continue supplying 38% to 41% of the nation’s electricity, while EPA says the rule will drop these units’ share sharply to 27%—and it will be far less if EPA’s optimistic assumptions do not pan out.⁴ Far from supporting an existing trend, the rule mandates a transformative shift of the power sector, and a stranding of billions of dollars in assets that otherwise have many more years of remaining useful life.

3. The rule requires *immediate* action. EPA claims there is no need for industry action before a D.C. Circuit decision because the initial compliance period does not begin until 2022. EPA Resp. at 60, 63-64. But EPA has acknowledged that about 70% of the rule’s 2030 emission reductions must be achieved *before* 2022.⁵ And both Utility Applicants and the nation’s power sector experts have explained that the resources and infrastructure the rule requires will take years to develop.⁶

² Joby Warrick, *White House set to adopt sweeping curbs on carbon pollution*, WASH. POST (Aug. 1, 2015), www.washingtonpost.com/national/healthscience/white-house-set-to-adopt-sweeping-curbs-on-carbon-pollution/2015/08/01/ba6627fa-385c-11e5-b673-1df005a0fb28_story.html (quoting White House Fact Sheet).

³ See Schwartz Decl. ¶¶ 18–22, 27–38 (a727–30, a733–39); Energy Ventures Analysis, Inc., *Evaluation of the Immediate Impact of the Clean Power Plan Rule on the Coal Industry* at 15, 62–63 (Oct. 2015) (EVA Report) (a765, a812–13); EPA, *Regulatory Impact Analysis for the Clean Power Plan Final Rule* at 2-3, 3-24 (Aug. 2015), www.epa.gov/cleanpowerplan/clean-power-plan-final-rule-regulatory-impact-analysis (RIA).

⁴ Schwartz Second Decl. ¶¶ 13–14 (a845–47).

⁵ RIA at 3-20, Tbl. 3-6 (estimating that 68.9% and 70.2% of the 2030 reductions are achieved in the rate-based and mass-based cases, respectively, in 2020).

⁶ See generally Declarations, Utility and Allied Party Stay Application (a307-a873); *infra* at 3-4.

Long lead times, often more than five years and in many instances as many as seventeen, are required to design, plan, permit, and site the needed renewable projects, *as well as the associated infrastructure* needed to transmit energy from those projects and (in the case of new gas-fired units) to get gas to those units.⁷ The Non-State Respondent-Intervenors argue misleadingly that the lead time for new solar and wind resources “can be significantly shorter than five years,” Non-State Intervenors’ Resp. at 20-21, but obliquely concede that this holds only “absent the need for new transmission to deliver the power from these resources to the load.” *Id.*⁸ EPA chooses to ignore the lead time issue altogether, except to incorrectly state that the utilities’ estimates of harm are based on 2030 emission requirements, rather than the earlier, 2022 requirements. EPA Resp. at 63. They are not.⁹

Notwithstanding its conceded lack of expertise in energy markets, grid performance, or grid reliability, EPA claims to have determined that the shift to new renewable resources “would not add significant transmission requirements.” EPA Resp. at 63. But the nation’s actual (non-partisan) experts on these issues—including the North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC), one of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) Commissioners, and regional grid coordinators—have warned that *significant* new infrastructure must be built to

⁷ See Utility and Allied Party Stay Application at 12, 14-15, 18-19.

⁸ In any event, solar and wind farms often take far more than five years to complete, particularly when environmental assessments or bird studies are required by federal law or where projects face local opposition; and only a small percentage of proposed projects actually are completed. See Utility and Allied Party Stay Application at 15, 18.

⁹ See, e.g., Raatz Decl. ¶¶ 21, 22 (a693-94) (“[I]t is anticipated Basin Electric will need to undertake the following changes to its generating assets in order for its affected steam generating EGUs to comply with the Final Rule *in 2022* The expected costs of building all these new assets, to comply with the Final Rule *in 2022*, is approximately \$5 billion.”) (emphases added).

support the new resources required by the rule, that this infrastructure will take several years to build, and that grid reliability will be seriously impaired if it is not already in place by 2022.¹⁰ Utilities, which are in the business of distributing power, have said the same thing: it will take years to develop the infrastructure needed to get power from new facilities to the areas where it is needed.¹¹

4. Uncertainty in how States will implement the rule reinforces—rather than undermines—why the industry must act *now*. EPA argues that, because final state plans are not due until September 2018, no utility need do *anything* now; it reasons that the utilities cannot “reliably identify what their compliance obligations will be, and they likely will not know them until 2018.” EPA Resp. at 61; *see also id.* at 14 (The rule “does not require any amount of reductions by any particular source at any particular time.”). But this is precisely the problem. The uncertainty itself requires that utilities act *now* to ensure that they can provide a reliable electric supply for hundreds of millions of customers *no matter what state programs are adopted and whether viable emission credit trading programs emerge or not*.

Moreover, massive restructuring of the industry will be required under *any* of EPA’s proffered alternatives; the particulars of a State’s individual plan are of little moment in this regard. EPA tasks Basin Electric Power Cooperative for supposedly basing its estimate of \$5 billion in compliance costs (\$330 million in the next two

¹⁰ NERC, RELIABILITY CONSIDERATIONS FOR CLEAN POWER PLAN DEVELOPMENT at 7 (Jan. 2016), www.nerc.com/news/Pages/States-Urged-to-Consider-Essential-Reliability-Services-Reserve-Margins-Project-Timelines-in-Rule-Implementation.aspx; Written Testimony of Tony Clark, Commissioner, FERC, U.S. House Committee on Energy and Commerce, Subcommittee on Energy and Power at 6–7 (Dec. 1, 2015) (a906–07); Southwest Power Pool, Inc., Comments on Proposed Rule at 6, 8 (Oct. 9, 2014) (a891, a893); Midcontinent Independent System Operator, Inc., Comments on Proposed Rule at 3 (Nov. 25, 2014) (a898).

¹¹ See, e.g., Stoltz Decl. ¶ 6, 14 (a862, a867–68).

years) on “speculative assumptions,” including that the States will adopt rate-based plans and will require each plant to meet the subcategory performance levels. EPA Resp. at 61-62. EPA ignores that Basin Electric determined the rule’s overall impact on it will be similar whether the States opt to adopt the sub-category performance rates, state-wide rate goals, or the EPA-established mass-based limit.¹²

5. EPA does not dispute that the rule will force coal-fired power plant shutdowns in the next few years. EPA’s only quibble is that Applicants have not “identif[ied] a specific power plant or coal mine” that will be shuttered in the next few months. *Id.* at 65. As EPA has acknowledged, its *own* modeling, which is “designed ... to gauge ... overall, power-sector-wide impacts,” *id.* at 66, predicts that the rule will cause about 11 GW of coal-fired generating capacity (53 units) to retire in 2016 alone, *id.* at 66-68.¹³ The identity of the specific plants EPA predicts will close is immaterial; the fact remains that EPA does not dispute that many plants will soon close as a result of the rule and others must take other costly operational steps to prepare for the rule’s massive “generation shifting” away from coal plants to other facilities. *Id.* at 13, 35-38. In their declarations, utilities described in detail the types of harms associated with such plant closures—harms that will occur in the near term for plants that must retire as a result of the rule.

¹² Raatz Decl. ¶¶ 6 n.1, 16 (a685, a690–91), cited in Utility and Allied Party Stay Application at 13.

¹³ See also EVA Report at 15 (a765).

EPA also mischaracterizes the comments submitted on the agency’s proposed revisions to the Cross-State Air Pollution Rule (CSAPR). *Id.* at 67-68.¹⁴ Utility Applicants agreed with EPA that the agency’s modeling does a poor job of predicting specific unit retirements. They have taken pains to point out to EPA erroneous unit-level assumptions, seeking to help it improve the model’s assessment of the “base case” scenario in the absence of the rule.¹⁵ In their CSAPR comments, stakeholders reiterated concerns about factual inaccuracies in EPA’s unit-level assumptions, and presented analysis *confirming* that substantial unit retirements will occur by 2018 in the 23 States subject to CSAPR.¹⁶ Fundamentally, specific unit retirement plans are orthogonal to the undisputed point of the Application (and of the rule itself) that the sector as a whole will suffer irreparable harm from the rule in the form of premature unit retirements—a point on which the analyses presented by Utility Applicants and EPA agree.

¹⁴ See also Schwartz Second Decl. ¶¶ 28–31 (a855–58). The utilities’ comments to which EPA refers, EPA Resp. at 67-68, in fact confirmed at least 16 GW of plant retirements by 2018 in 23 States. See Comments of Utility Air Regulatory Group on Proposed CSAPR Update, EPA-HQ-OAR-2015-0500-0253, at 43 (Feb. 1, 2016) (UARG CSAPR Comments). In those comments, utilities objected to EPA’s assumption that 75 GW of fossil plants in these States would retire by 2018—an assumption designed by EPA to force even more plant shutdowns under the CSAPR rule—but that in itself illustrates the immediate and irreparable harm EPA would impose on this industry. *Id.* EPA also neglects to point out that those comments stated that “[e]xact retirement plans may of course be affected by the outcome of pending litigation challenging the CPP (including pending applications to the U.S. Supreme Court to stay the CPP during judicial review) and approaches that States choose to implement the CPP in the next few years.” *Id.* at 43–44 n.34.

¹⁵ See, e.g., Comments of Southern Company on Proposed CSAPR Update, EPA-HQ-OAR-2015-0500-0290, at 39-40 (Feb. 1, 2016); Comments of Tennessee Valley Authority on the Notice of Data Availability of the Environmental Protection Agency’s Updated Ozone Transport Modeling Data for the 2008 Ozone National Ambient Air Quality Standard (“Aug. 4, 2015 NODA”), EPA-HQ-OAR-2015-0500-0035, at 1-3 (Oct. 23, 2015); Comments of Southern Company on Aug. 4, 2015 NODA, EPA-HQ-OAR-2015-0500-0046, at 3-7 (Oct. 23, 2015); Comments of Lafayette Utilities System on Aug. 4, 2015 NODA, EPA-HQ-OAR-2015-0500-0045, at 2-4 (Oct. 23, 2015); Comments of Alliant Energy on Aug. 4, 2015 NODA, EPA-HQ-OAR-2015-0500-0032, at 1-2 (Oct. 23, 2015).

¹⁶ UARG CSAPR Comments at 43–44.

6. The utilities' recent experience with the Mercury Air Toxics Standards (MATS) supports a stay. EPA does not deny that it obtained compliance with the MATS rule's requirements despite the fact that this Court held the rule invalid in *Michigan v. EPA*, 135 S. Ct. 2699 (2015). Instead, EPA offers empty assurances that the same will not happen again. EPA Resp. at 68-69. EPA claims the four-and-a-half-year timeline for compliance with the MATS rule (including a one-year extension) can somehow be differentiated from the six-year timeline for sources to undertake the industry-wide shift in power generation required by this rule. *Id.* at 69. It also claims the MATS rule's direct imposition of specific requirements onto covered sources, rather than implementation of requirements through the State planning process, makes a difference. *Id.* As explained above, it does not. Regardless of how each State implements the rule, the rule will necessitate immense shifting from existing fossil-fuel sources to new renewable sources, and will require immediate steps to accomplish that result.

For all these reasons, a stay here is necessary to ensure meaningful review of EPA's unprecedented and unlawful attempt to restructure the energy sector under the guise of the Clean Air Act. A stay will avoid forcing Utility Applicants into an aggressive transformation of the power sector while the rule's dubious legality is reviewed. And a stay of the rule—like the rule itself—will have little impact on climate change. The rule addresses less than one percent of global human-made

greenhouse emissions, and EPA does not even claim that the rule will do anything to halt or mitigate climate change.¹⁷

¹⁷ EPA estimates the rule will reduce U.S. anthropogenic CO₂ emissions by 413-415 million tons in 2030. RIA at 3-19, Tbl. 3-5. The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) calculated that 2010 global anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions were 49 billion tons. IPCC, *Climate Change 2014, Mitigation of Climate Change*, at 6 (2014), http://report.mitigation2014.org/spm/ipcc_wg3_ar5_summary-for-policymakers_approved.pdf. Assuming similar global emissions in 2030, EPA's estimated emission reductions due to the rule would equal just 0.85% of global anthropogenic emissions.

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Respectfully submitted,



Christina F. Gomez
Counsel of Record
Garrison W. Kaufman
Lawrence E. Volmert
Jill H. Van Noord
HOLLAND & HART LLP
555 Seventeenth Street, Suite 3200
Denver, CO 80202
303-295-8000

Patrick R. Day
HOLLAND & HART LLP
2515 Warren Avenue, Suite 450
Cheyenne, WY 82001
307-778-4200

Emily C. Schilling
HOLLAND & HART LLP
222 South Main Street, Suite 2200
Salt Lake City, UT 84101
801-799-5800

Samina M. Bharmal
*Admitted in New York only,
practicing under DC bar member supervision*
HOLLAND & HART LLP
975 F Street NW, Suite 900
Washington, DC 20004
202-654-6915

/s/ Grant F. Crandall

Grant F. Crandall
General Counsel
UNITED MINE WORKERS OF AMERICA
18354 Quantico Gateway Drive
Triangle, VA 22172
Tel: (703) 291-2429
gcrandall@umwa.org

Arthur Traynor, III
Staff Counsel
UNITED MINE WORKERS OF AMERICA
18354 Quantico Gateway Drive
Triangle, VA 22172
Tel: (703) 291-2457
atraynor@umwa.org

Eugene M. Trisko
LAW OFFICES OF EUGENE M. TRISKO
P.O. Box 596
Berkeley Springs, WV 25411
Tel: (304) 258-1977
emtrisko7@gmail.com

Counsel for United Mine Workers of America

/s/ William M. Bumpers

William M. Bumpers
Megan H. Berge
BAKER BOTTS L.L.P.
1299 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20004
Tel: (202) 639-7700
william.bumpers@bakerbotts.com
megan.berge@bakerbotts.com

Counsel for Westar Energy, Inc.

/s/ Allison D. Wood

F. William Brownell
Allison D. Wood
Henry V. Nickel
Tauna M. Szymanski
HUNTON & WILLIAMS LLP
2200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20037
Tel: (202) 955-1500
bbrownell@hunton.com
awood@hunton.com
hnickel@hunton.com
tszymanski@hunton.com

*Counsel for Utility Air Regulatory
Group and American Public Power
Association*

/s/ Eugene M. Trisko

Eugene M. Trisko
LAW OFFICES OF EUGENE M. TRISKO
P.O. Box 596
Berkeley Springs, WV 25411
Tel: (304) 258-1977
Tel: (301) 639-5238 (cell)
emtrisko7@gmail.com

*Counsel for International
Brotherhood of Boilermakers, Iron
Ship Builders, Blacksmiths, Forgers
& Helpers*

Stacey Turner
SOUTHERN COMPANY SERVICES, INC.
600 18th Street North
BIN 14N-8195
Birmingham, AL 35203
Tel: (205) 257-2823
staturne@southernco.com

*Counsel for Alabama Power Company,
Georgia Power Company, Gulf Power
Company, and Mississippi Power Company*

/s/ Margaret Claiborne Campbell
Margaret Claiborne Campbell
Angela J. Levin
TROUTMAN SANDERS LLP
600 Peachtree Street, NE, Suite 5200
Atlanta, GA 30308-2216
Tel: (404) 885-3000
margaret.campbell@troutmansanders.com
angela.levin@troutmansanders.com

Counsel for Georgia Power Company

/s/ Jeffrey A. Stone
Jeffrey A. Stone
BEGGS & LANE, RLLP
501 Commendancia Street
Pensacola, FL 32502
Tel: (850) 432-2451
JAS@beggslane.com

James S. Alves
2110 Trescott Drive
Tallahassee, FL 32308
Tel: (850) 566-7607
jim.s.alves@outlook.com

Counsel for Gulf Power Company

/s/ C. Grady Moore, III
C. Grady Moore, III
Steven G. McKinney
BALCH & BINGHAM LLP
1901 Sixth Avenue North, Suite
1500
Birmingham, AL 35303-4642
Tel: (205) 251-8100
Fax: (205) 488-5704
gmoore@balch.com
smckinney@balch.com

*Counsel for Alabama Power
Company*

/s/ Terese T. Wyly
Terese T. Wyly
Ben H. Stone
BALCH & BINGHAM LLP
1310 Twenty Fifth Avenue
Gulfport, MS 39501-1931
Tel: (228) 214-0413
twyly@balch.com
bstone@balch.com

*Counsel for Mississippi Power
Company*

/s/ James S. Alves
James S. Alves
2110 Trescott Drive
Tallahassee, FL 32308
Tel: (850) 566-7607
jim.s.alves@outlook.com

*Counsel for CO₂ Task Force of the
Florida Electric Power
Coordinating Group, Inc.*

/s/ P. Stephen Gidiere III

P. Stephen Gidiere III
Thomas L. Casey III
Julia B. Barber
BALCH & BINGHAM LLP
1901 6th Ave. N., Suite 1500
Birmingham, AL 35203
Tel: (205) 251-8100
sgidiere@balch.com

Stephanie Z. Moore
Vice President and General Counsel
Luminant Generation Company LLC
1601 Bryan Street, 22nd Floor
Dallas, TX 75201

Daniel J. Kelly
Vice President and Associate General
Counsel
Energy Future Holdings Corp.
1601 Bryan Street, 43rd Floor
Dallas, TX 75201

*Counsel for Luminant Generation Company
LLC; Oak Grove Management Company LLC;
Big Brown Power Company LLC; Sandow
Power Company LLC; Big Brown Lignite
Company LLC; Luminant Mining Company
LLC; and Luminant Big Brown Mining
Company LLC*

/s/ Chaim Mandelbaum

Chaim Mandelbaum
Litigation Manager
FREE MARKET ENVIRONMENTAL LAW CLINIC
726 N. Nelson Street, Suite 9
Arlington, VA 22203
Tel: (703) 577-9973
chaim12@gmail.com

*Counsel for Energy & Environment Legal
Institute*

/s/ Allison D. Wood

Allison D. Wood
Tauna M. Szymanski
Andrew D. Knudsen
HUNTON & WILLIAMS LLP
2200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20037
Tel: (202) 955-1500
awood@hunton.com
tszymanski@hunton.com
aknudsen@hunton.com

*Counsel for Montana-Dakota
Utilities Co., a Division of MDU
Resources Group, Inc.*

/s/ William M. Bumpers

William M. Bumpers
Megan H. Berge
BAKER BOTTS L.L.P.
1299 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20004
Tel: (202) 639-7700
william.bumpers@bakerbotts.com
megan.berge@bakerbotts.com

*Counsel for NorthWestern
Corporation d/b/a NorthWestern
Energy*

/s/ Thomas A. Lorenzen

Thomas A. Lorenzen
Daniel W. Wolff
Sherrie A. Armstrong
CROWELL & MORING LLP
1001 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20004
Tel: (202) 624-2500
tlorenzen@crowell.com

*Counsel for National Rural Electric
Cooperative Association; Big Rivers Electric
Corporation; Brazos Electric Power
Cooperative, Inc.; Buckeye Power, Inc.; Central
Montana Electric Power Cooperative; Central
Power Electric Cooperative, Inc., Corn Belt
Power Cooperative; Dairyland Power
Cooperative; East River Electric Power
Cooperative, Inc.; Georgia Transmission
Corporation; Kansas Electric Power
Cooperative, Inc.; North Carolina Electric
Membership Corporation; Northwest Iowa
Power Cooperative; Oglethorpe Power
Corporation; PowerSouth Energy Cooperative;
Prairie Power, Inc.; Rushmore Electric Power
Cooperative, Inc.; Seminole Electric
Cooperative, Inc.; Southern Illinois Power
Cooperative; Sunflower Electric Power
Corporation; and Upper Missouri G. & T.
Electric Cooperative, Inc.*

Of Counsel

Rae Cronmiller
Environmental Counsel
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF RURAL
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES
4301 Wilson Blvd.
Arlington, VA 22203
Tel: (703) 907-5500
rae.cronmiller@nreca.coop

/s/ Eric L. Hiser

Eric L. Hiser
JORDEN BISCHOFF & HISER, PLC
7272 E. Indian School Road, Suite 360
Scottsdale, AZ 85251
Tel: (480) 505-3927
ehiser@jordenbischoff.com

*Counsel for Arizona Electric Power
Cooperative, Inc.*

/s/ Christopher L. Bell

Christopher L. Bell
GREENBERG TRAURIG LLP
1000 Louisiana Street, Suite 1700
Houston, TX 77002
Tel: (713) 374-3556
bellc@gtlaw.com

*Counsel for Golden Spread Electrical
Cooperative, Inc.*

/s/ John M. Holloway III

John M. Holloway III
SUTHERLAND ASBILL & BRENNAN LLP
700 Sixth Street, N.W., Suite 700
Washington, D.C. 20001
Tel: (202) 383-0100
Fax: (202) 383-3593
jay.holloway@sutherland.com

*Counsel for East Kentucky Power
Cooperative, Inc.; Hoosier Energy
Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc.; Minnkota
Power Cooperative, Inc.; and South
Mississippi Electric Power Association*

/s/ Brian A. Prestwood

Brian A. Prestwood
Senior Corporate and Compliance
Counsel
ASSOCIATED ELECTRIC
COOPERATIVE, INC.
2814 S. Golden, P.O. Box 754
Springfield, MO 65801
Tel: (417) 885-9273
bprestwood@aeci.org

*Counsel for Associated Electric
Cooperative, Inc.*

/s/ David Crabtree

David Crabtree
Vice President, General Counsel
DESERET GENERATION &
TRANSMISSION CO-OPERATIVE
10714 South Jordan Gateway
South Jordan, UT 84095
Tel: (801) 619-9500
Crabtree@deseretpower.com

*Counsel for Deseret Generation &
Transmission Co-operative*

/s/ Patrick Burchette

Patrick Burchette
HOLLAND & KNIGHT LLP
800 17th Street, N.W., Suite 1100
Washington, D.C. 20006
Tel: (202) 469-5102
Patrick.Burchette@hklaw.com

*Counsel for East Texas Electric
Cooperative, Inc.; Northeast Texas
Electric Cooperative, Inc.; Sam
Rayburn G&T Electric
Cooperative, Inc.; and Tex-La
Electric Cooperative of Texas, Inc.*

/s/ Mark Walters

Mark Walters
Michael J. Nasi
JACKSON WALKER L.L.P.
100 Congress Avenue, Suite 1100
Austin, TX 78701
Tel: (512) 236-2000
mwalters@jw.com
mnasi@jw.com

*Counsel for San Miguel Electric
Cooperative, Inc. and South Texas
Electric Cooperative, Inc.*

/s/ Megan H. Berge

Megan H. Berge
BAKER BOTTS L.L.P.
1299 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20004
Tel: (202) 639-7700
megan.berge@bakerbotts.com

*Counsel for Western Farmers Electric
Cooperative*

/s/ Allison D. Wood

Allison D. Wood
Tauna M. Szymanski
Andrew D. Knudsen
HUNTON & WILLIAMS LLP
2200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20037
Tel: (202) 955-1500
awood@hunton.com
tszymanski@hunton.com
aknudsen@hunton.com

*Counsel for Tri-State Generation and
Transmission Association, Inc.*

/s/ Randolph G. Holt

Randolph G. Holt
Jeremy L. Fetty
PARR RICHEY OBREMSKEY
FRANSEN & PATTERSON LLP
Wabash Valley Power
Association, Inc.
722 N. High School Road
P.O. Box 24700
Indianapolis, IN 46224
Tel: (317) 481-2815
R_holt@wvpa.com
jfetty@parrlaw.com

*Counsel for Wabash Valley Power
Association, Inc.*

/s/ Steven C. Kohl

Steven C. Kohl
Gaetan Gerville-Reache
WARNER NORCROSS & JUDD LLP
2000 Town Center, Suite 2700
Southfield, MI 48075-1318
Tel: (248) 784-5000
skohl@wnj.com

*Counsel for Wolverine Power
Supply Cooperative, Inc.*

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I certify that on this 5th day of February, 2016, I caused to be served the above document on the following by overnight commercial carrier and electronic mail where available:

Donald B. Verrilli, Jr.
Solicitor General of the United States
Room 5616
Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.
Washington, DC 20530-0001
SupremeCtBriefs@usdoj.gov

Richard Ayres
Ayres Law Group LLP
1707 L Street, N.W., Suite 850
Washington, DC 20036
ayresr@ayreslawgroup.com

Barbara D. Underwood
Solicitor General
State of New York
120 Broadway, 25th Floor
New York, NY 10271
barbara.underwood@ag.ny.gov



Christina F. Gomez