

To: The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission

888 First St NE

Washington, DC 20426

Date: May 11, 2021

Re: FERC MUST GRANT PETITION FOR RULEMAKING TO ADDRESS RATEPAYER FUNDING TO GROUPS ENGAGED IN ANTI-CLIMATE ACTIVITIES (DOCKET RM21-15)

Dear Chairman Glick and Commissioners Chatterjee, Christie, Clements, and Danly:

On behalf of our millions of members and supporters nationwide, we, the undersigned 93 organizations—including Vote Solar, Institute for Local Self-Reliance, and Partnership for Southern Equity—urge the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (“FERC”) to grant the Center for Biological Diversity’s March 17, 2021 Petition for Rulemaking to Amend the Uniform System of Accounts’ (“USofA”) Treatment of Industry Association Dues. Granting the Petition would help address utilities’ unconscionable practice of charging electricity customers for payments to groups engaged in political activities that promote fossil fuels, worsen air pollution, and obstruct the urgently-needed clean and just energy transition to combat the climate emergency.

The Petition seeks to amend FERC’s accounting system to help stop the long-standing practice of forcing everyday ratepayers to fund anti-climate, anti-environmental trade groups. The USofA currently allows electric utilities to recover the costs of financing industry association groups engaged in political activities from their captive customers – actions that are often in direct conflict with their customers’ interests. For example, utility trade groups and their affiliates have litigated against standards restricting pollution, trained utility executives in how to combat clean energy policies -- including policies that would make it easier for people to go solar -- and sought to undermine protections for wildlife and the environment.

FERC could easily address this troubling issue by granting and adopting the Petition’s proposed rule. Specifically, by moving industry association dues from Account 930.2 to Account 426 in the USofA, FERC would prohibit utilities from presumptively recovering these dues from customers and force utilities to defend why such fees should be charged to customers.

President Biden recently directed all agencies “to deploy [their] full capacity . . . to combat the climate crisis.”¹ As our nation attempts to address the trifecta of climate, COVID, and racism, FERC can and should leverage its capacity to help to stop utilities from directing customers’ monies toward industry groups working against the public interest and for private fossil fuel profit. Granting this Petition is a crucial step in the right direction.

Sincerely,

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¹ See President Biden Executive Order on Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad, Sections 201 and 205(b)(i) (“Biden Order”) (Jan. 27, 2021) (emphasis added), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/01/27/executive-order-on-tackling-the-climate-crisis-at-home-and-abroad/>.

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