

Congress considers presidential nominations to key agency positions

September 27, 2017

The Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation held a hearing on September 27 for four presidential nominations, including Howard “Skip” Elliott to head the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration, and Rear Admiral Timothy Gallaudet, an oceanographer and climate expert, to be Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere.

On September 19, the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources held a hearing to consider various nominations for key positions at the Department of Energy (DOE), the Department of the Interior (DOI), and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). Joseph Balash, nominated to be an Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Land and Mineral Management on July 19, is now pending Senate confirmation. In August, the Senate confirmed two new members of the FERC, Neil Chatterjee and Robert Powelson, while Richard Glick and Kevin McIntyre are still pending confirmation to fill the remaining two FERC seats. If confirmed, McIntyre would serve as chairman of the Commission.

Administrator Scott Pruitt is currently the only Senate-confirmed appointee at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). On September 5, the Trump Administration included three nominees to fill assistant administrator positions at the EPA among 46 nominations sent to the Senate. David Ross, currently a Wisconsin Assistant Attorney General and Director of the Environmental Protection Unit for the Wisconsin Department of Justice, was nominated to head the Office of Water. Matthew Leopold, a former general counsel for the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, would join the Office of General Council, and William Wehrum, a partner and head of the Administrative Law Group at Hunton & Williams, would serve at the Office of Air and Radiation. The Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works will hold a hearing on October 4 to consider these nominations along with Michael Dourson, another EPA nominee for the Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention who is still awaiting confirmation.

Sources: CNN, U.S. Senate, White House Office of the Press Secretary
