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A series of nomination processes continued as Congress wrapped up their lame duck session—the final legislative period of this term—following the November 6 midterm elections. Nearly two years into this administration, President Donald Trump is still nominating department heads at the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), Department of Energy (DOE), National Park Service (NPS), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and other federal agencies.

The Senate confirmed Bernard McNamee to be a member of FERC on December 6. At a previous Committee on Energy and Natural Resources hearing on November 15, the Democratic committee members raised concerns about McNamee's nomination because of alignment with fossil fuels and nuclear energy in preference to renewables. For example, McNamee was involved in a rejected DOE policy to support struggling nuclear and coal plants that was criticized by Democrats. After the Senate hearing, a video emerged showing McNamee criticizing renewable energy and its proponents last February at a Texas Public Policy Foundation event in Austin. Democrats attempted delay the vote, but the Senate committee approved McNamee for the position at FERC on November 27. The full Senate voted along party lines (50-49) to confirm McNamee on December 6.

Also at the November 15 meeting, the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources considered the nominations of Dr. Rita Baranwal to be assistant secretary for nuclear energy and Raymond Vela to be director of NPS. Both Baranwal and Vela were reported favorably out of the committee on November 27 and await a final confirmation vote by the Senate.

On November 16, President Trump announced that he intends to nominate Andrew Wheeler, the current acting EPA chief, to be the next EPA administrator following the resignation of Scott Pruitt. The pending nomination likely sets up a lengthy fight from Democrats in Congress over Wheeler's ties to the fossil fuel industry.

The Senate Environment and Public Works committee held a hearing on November 29 to question Alexandra Dunn, President Trump's second choice to lead EPA's chemicals office. The president's previous nominee, Michael Dourson, faced strong opposition to his ties to the chemical industry and withdrew his nomination in December 2017. Dunn is an environmental lawyer who currently serves as EPA's regional administrator for New England. She is widely expected to be approved by Senate vote. According to the Washington Post's administration appointee tracker, there are seven nominations currently pending Senate action for DOE, three for the Interior Department, and three for EPA.

Sources: Environmental Protection Agency; Partnership for Public Service; Politico; U.S. Senate, Committee on Energy and Natural Resources; The New York Times; The Washington Post.
