



February 20, 2025

The Honorable Nick Frentz
Chair
Energy, Util., Environment, & Climate Comm.
Minnesota Senate
3109 Minnesota Senate Bldg.
St. Paul, MN 55155

The Honorable Andrew Mathews
Ranking Minority Member
Energy, Util., Environment, & Climate Comm.
Minnesota Senate
2233 Minnesota Senate Bldg.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Frentz, Ranking Minority Leader Mathews, and Members of the Committee:

The Legal Services Advocacy Project (LSAP) writes to enthusiastically support the nomination of Ms. Audrey Partridge to the position of Commissioner on the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (PUC) and strongly urge the Senate Energy, Utilities, Environment, & Climate Committee to confirm Ms. Partridge's appointment. LSAP provides policy, legislative, and administrative advocacy on behalf of Legal Aid statewide. Legal Aid's clients include Minnesotans who have low incomes, elderly Minnesotans and Minnesotan with disabilities.

I have worked with Ms. Partridge for nearly ten years and can say from personal experience that I can think of no one more qualified for, or who would bring more expertise to, this position than Ms. Partridge.

I am deeply familiar with the duties, functions, and mission of the PUC. My familiarity stems from two sources: for nearly 15 years I served in various management roles at the New York State Public Service Commission, one of the largest regulatory bodies in the country; and for the past 25 years that I have been at LSAP, I have participated in dozens of Minnesota PUC dockets and worked with commissioners and staff on numerous policy initiatives. LSAP understands the critical role that these regulators play in ensuring the reliability of the system, ensuring the financial health of our regulated monopoly utility providers, protecting ratepayers, and protecting the public interest.

From this perspective I can say with the utmost confidence that Ms. Partridge has the full spectrum of understanding of the role of the PUC in regulating Minnesota's gas, electric, and telecommunications utilities and the need to ensure utility service in Minnesota is safe, adequate, and reliable. Ms. Partridge has been a leader in this state in the quest to transform our energy system to meet future needs while understanding the parallel need to create jobs in the process. She would be an invaluable source of knowledge on this regulatory body because she brings both nonprofit and private sector (utility company) experience and expertise to the table.

The hallmark of her work is the demand for data and information in order to reach a conclusion on any issue. She is relentless in her pursuit of facts and has an impressive grasp of the complicated technical aspects of the generation, transmission, and distribution of utility service, having served inside one of the two largest utilities in the state and on staff at CAPX2020, the complex, ambitious, collaborative, and successful initiative to expand the transmission grid system to ensure reliable and foster the transition to clean energy, involving 11 utilities in the Upper Midwest.

Planning for the future of our energy system and ensuring that regulatory models foster, rather than impede, progress is one of the most critical functions of the PUC. In my experience, no one is more adept or has more skills in this area than does Ms. Partridge. She not only has the vision for what is required to adapt our current system to future needs, but also fundamentally understands that progress and success in moving forward depends on innovative thinking, intelligent planning, and, importantly, inclusion of all affected parties.

A good example is Ms. Partridge's instrumental role in the recent passage of the Natural Gas Innovation Act, which helps natural gas utilities invest in innovative clean energy resources and technologies, and which garnered strong bipartisan support. Further, Ms. Partridge was at the center of the effort to enact the Energy Conservation and Optimization Act (ECO), which transformed Minnesota's older conservation and energy efficiency program model into a more modern one that is now positioned to meet the emerging requirements of the transition to a cleaner, more efficient system. She has also been deeply involved in the Integrated Resource Planning dockets and thus has a keen understanding of what is necessary to meet Minnesota's energy demand into the future as efficiently as possible, which ensures the lowest possible cost to consumers.

In sum, Ms. Partridge brings an intelligent, thoughtful, deliberative, data-driven, and collaborative approach to problem solving. She will protect ratepayers and work to ensure the viability of our utility companies and the reliability of our utility infrastructure. I cannot urge you strongly enough to confirm Ms. Partridge as our newest PUC Commissioner.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my views on Ms. Partridge's pending appointment to the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ron Elwood".

Ron Elwood
Supervising Attorney